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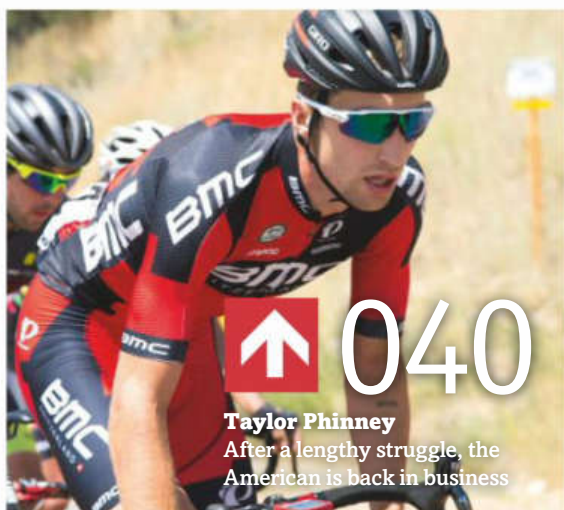
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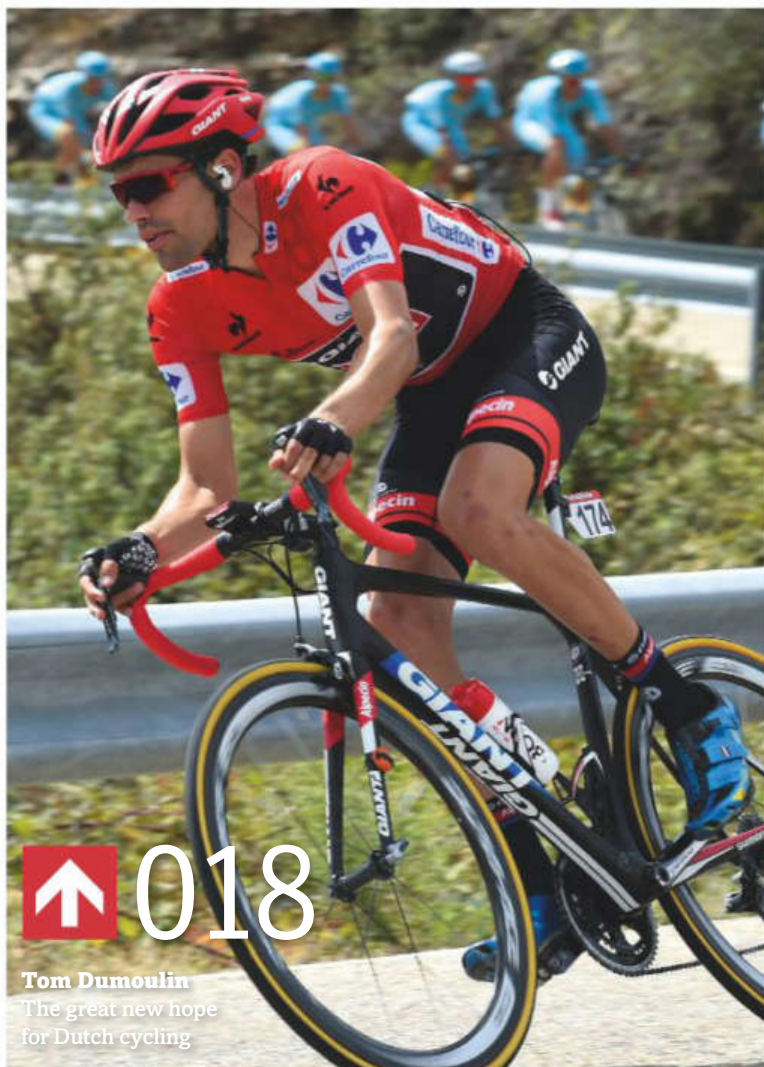
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# Editorial

## André Greipel's hit a late career high



**B**y the time you read this column, the 2015 season will almost be over, save Il Lombardia and a new race in Abu Dhabi. This time last year, few would have thought that we would be crowning André Greipel the best sprinter in the WorldTour.

Last year, the likeable Lotto-Soudal rider wasn't even the best German sprinter — this year, he has been winning all season and won four of the five Tour de France stages that ended in a sprint.

Greipel has done what few other sprinters have done, and got better with age. At 33, he has lost none of his speed, and has paired that attribute with consistency: winning a stage of each stage race he started in 2015. OK, he didn't win at the Three days of De Panne, but he only contested one sprint and lost to Alexander Kristoff, who was in the midst of his Classics campaign, so we shouldn't let that spoil Greipel's deserved plaudits.

Many will point to the disappearance of his compatriot Marcel Kittel this season as a reason to question Greipel's achievements. But he has come up against, and consistently beaten, Mark Cavendish, Peter Sagan, John Degenkolb and Kristoff. Not bad for an 'old guy' who's been racing in the top division for 10 seasons.

**Simon Richardson** Acting Editor



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**CYCLO-CROSS  
WORLD CUP**

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Riders kick up a desert storm as the cross World Cup gets under way in Las Vegas.  
Photo: Wil Matthews



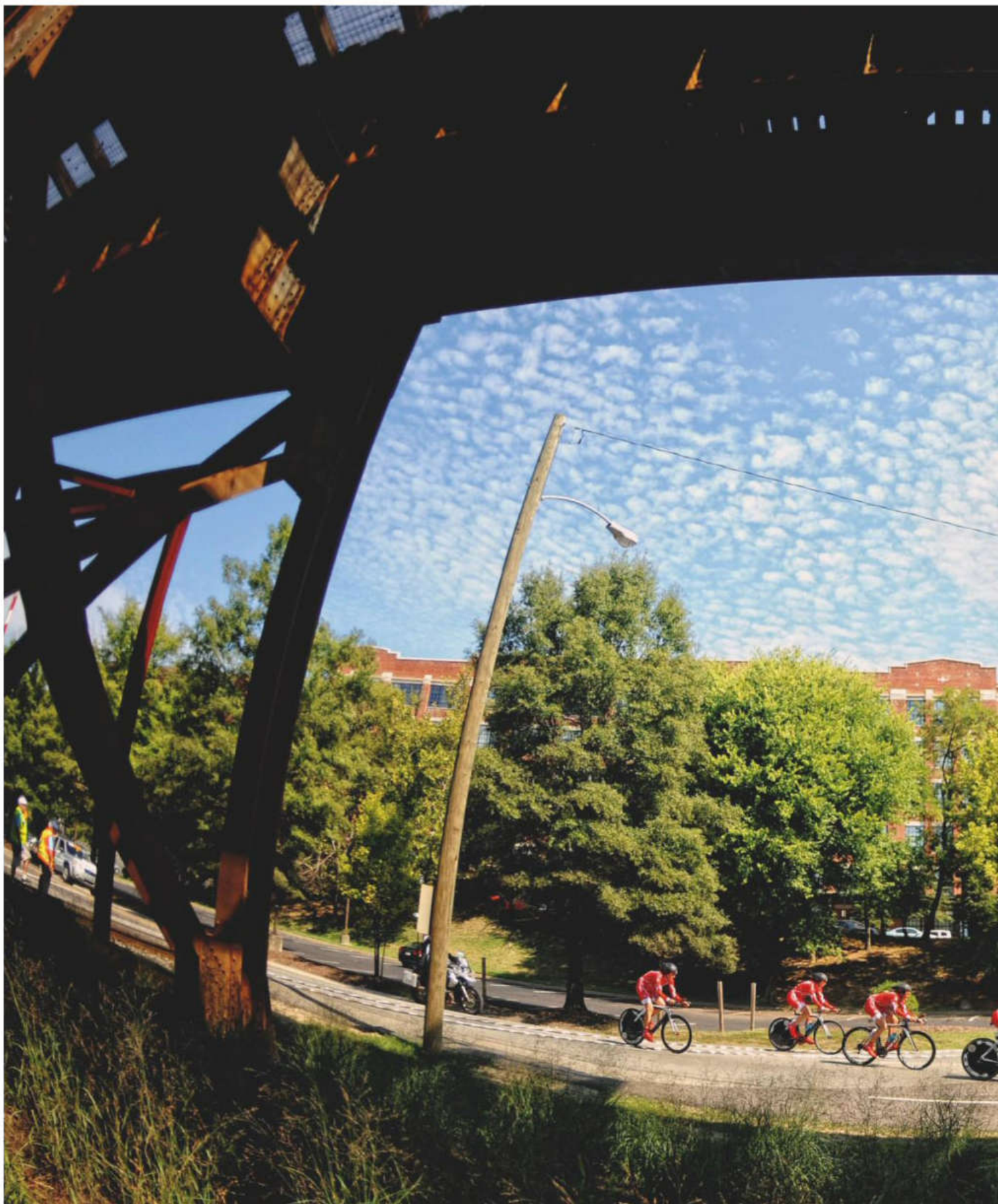


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Dylan Groenewegen is sent flying by Jens Debusschere on the wet roads of Koolscamp.  
Photo: Cor Vos





**ROAD WORLD  
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The Pepper Palace team were first off in the women's team time trial in Richmond, USA.  
Photo: Cor Vos





TRANSFER SEASON IN FULL SWING

# Contract crunch time

**Richard Abraham**

**A**nyone involved in professional cycling has to come to terms with insecurity. Teams and sponsors come and go, new races burst on to the scene while others disappear, and riders are constantly faced with the imminent possibility of their jobs changing or even disappearing. Indeed, if there's one thing pros really want, it's stability. And as the transfer season hits full swing, this year is no different.

"Bike riders thrive on security, especially when you look at cycling generally; teams come and go quite often," Chris Juul Jensen tells *Cycle Sport*. "So, to be reassured for two years is always nice, particularly when it comes early in the season."

Juul Jensen will move from Tinkoff-Saxo to Orica-GreenEdge over the winter after signing a two-year deal with the Australian team in August. His was a relatively straightforward move in a relatively stable rider market. The Irish-born Dane, 26, attracted interest

**Above:** Chris Juul Jensen is moving from Tinkoff-Saxo to Orica-GreenEdge, having signed a two-year deal

due to his efforts at the Giro d'Italia and received the odd nod or word of praise in the race convoy. One thing led to another, his agent got talking with teams and, after the UCI's August 1 deadline passed, a contract was signed.

This year riders can be grateful that no teams have yet disappeared; two years ago, Euskaltel and Vacansoleil folded and nearly 50 riders flooded the transfer market; similar happened when HTC disappeared in 2011.

"When a team is close to collapse, a lot of other teams will wait to see what



## “Employment instability is one of the worst aspects of the sport”

**Above:** When Vacansoleil folded, Juan Antonio Flecha (right) chose retirement over negotiation in a flooded market

happens and whether they can pick up the riders for cheap,” says rider agent Andrew McQuaid, who manages Juul Jensen. “It means a lot of team managers hold back.”

### Sweet stability

“This year, there are no teams collapsing which has helped, and not too many big riders have moved, so it has been as stable a year as I have seen in the past four or five years,” McQuaid adds.

Yet more change *is* on the horizon, and the tremors that could herald a

larger earthquake have already been felt. During the World Championships, the UCI announced the principles for reform of the WorldTour for 2017. Along with new races, stricter operating rules for teams and an overhaul of the ranking system, the proposed reforms would see the sport introduce three-year WorldTour licences intended to “encourage investment leading to increased stability in team structures”. And possible reductions in team sizes.

Rumours have abounded and the current lack of a definitive plan has been evident. National governing body British Cycling turned down the Tour de Yorkshire’s bid to expand from three to four days and seek 2.HC ranking next year, citing concerns over a possible calendar change.

Many riders out of contract in 2014 looked to bag three-year deals to see them through 2017, while this year one-year contracts or extensions have

been more common. Richie Porte (Sky to BMC), Adam Blythe (Orica-GreenEdge to Tinkoff-Saxo), Tom Boonen (Etixx-Quick Step) have all penned deals to the end of 2016.

“If you’re on a year contract, you sign in August 2015; already by March 2016 you’re starting to think about next year and the fact that you have no contract, so it comes around very quickly,” McQuaid adds. “You don’t have that much security or peace of mind, and it can be quite scary if you have a family. You might get your final pay cheque in December but if you don’t get a new contract, you’re getting paid absolutely nothing in January.”

### Longer licences

With most teams finalising budgets and sponsorship from year to year, the idea of a three-year WorldTour licence would in theory bring more medium-term security to riders and staff. Yet in practice it could cause more problems than it solves.

Compare cycling to English football’s Premier League, which currently attracts billions in sponsorship from Gulf states, international banks and car firms. Current WorldTour title sponsors include Italian sheet metal manufacturer Lampre and Belgian firm Soudal, which makes sealants and grout.

Unlike enormous multinationals, not all of cycling’s sponsors are willing or able to commit to three years. This summer, Europcar team manager Jean-René Bernaudeau signed up an 11th-hour replacement sponsor, Direct Energie, for next season. Convincing a sponsor to commit three times the funding would have been even tougher.

“It’s one of the worst aspects of the sport, the instability around the top level,” says McQuaid. “But it’s not going to be changed overnight. I’ve accepted it as part of the job. Hopefully it will improve.”

Ironically, cycling’s current push for stability will inevitably create more uncertainty. The bad news for riders waiting for their next payslip is that it might get worse before it gets better.

NETHERLANDS' LONG WAIT MAY BE OVER

# Dumoulin: the next Dutch hero

He may have lost the Vuelta on the race's penultimate day, but from his showing in Spain, Tom Dumoulin has all the makings of a future Grand Tour star

**Gregor Brown**

**S**aturday, September 12. Tom Dumoulin sat, destroyed, in the passenger seat of Giant-Alpecin's team car in Cercedilla. He glanced up at the digital screen behind the podium, which confirmed that he had lost the Vuelta a España lead, along with the red jersey on his back, and slipped to sixth overall.

Italian Fabio Aru and his Astana gang had ambushed Dumoulin; Aru jumped from second overall to Vuelta victor. Even so, Dutch fans had reason to celebrate the 24-year-old Maastricht man's achievements.

The Dutch regularly road trip all over the world to watch cycling, particularly to Alpe d'Huez where they

take their camper vans and turn it into their own orange-themed, Heineken-fuelled disco. And the public easily related to the dark-haired, 6ft 1in Dumoulin, who grew up next to the former finish of the Amstel Gold Race and lives where it now ends in Valkenburg.

While he slowly rode himself from time triallist to Vuelta contender, the momentum built back at his home in northern Europe. With Dumoulin in the red jersey after the third week's time trial, newspaper *De Telegraaf* ran the headline: 'Can Tom become number three?', in reference to the fact only two Dutchmen have ever won a Grand Tour.

Another Grand Tour win would have been big for the Netherlands, which entered its first team in the Tour in the

**Below** Ever the sportsman, Dumoulin congratulates Vuelta winner, Fabio Aru



1960s. For a proud cycling country, it counts just four Grand Tour wins: Jan Janssen's 1967 Vuelta and 1968 Tour victories, and Joop Zoetemelk's from the 1979 Vuelta and 1980 Tour. It's been a long wait since then.

Dumoulin had appeared ready to become the third Dutchman, but regardless of what the digital screen read after that Saturday's stage in Cercedilla, Dutch followers have continued to believe that he could be their next cycling hero.



### Clocking on

"There was a lot of respect for what he accomplished. People still believe that he can contend for Grand Tours," Raymond Kerckhoffs, journalist for *De Telegraaf* explained.

"We've had Robert Gesink finish fourth and sixth in the Tour, and Bauke Mollema sixth in the Tour and fourth in the Vuelta, but Dumoulin has a secret weapon — he can attack and gain time like no other in time trials."

Dumoulin's strength against the clock

showed on his debut for the Dutch team. At the 2010 Portugal GP, part of the under-23s Nations Cup, he rode an aero bike for the first time in his life and won the opening time trial stage. He gained enough to claim the overall classification the next day. He kept improving, and raced to a bronze medal behind Sir Bradley Wiggins in the 2014 Worlds time trial in Ponferrada, Spain. Those same skills, coupled with strength in the mountains, helped him ride to third overall in the Tour of Switzerland in June.

**Above** Dumoulin's reign in the red jersey came to an end on the penultimate stage of this year's Vuelta

### Just like Wiggo

Given his past and his ride at the Vuelta this year, drawing a comparison to Wiggins has become easy.

"It stands out by miles," Sky's team principal, Sir David Brailsford said. "When you can take that time trial ability and use it to go uphill, you become a very potent force in stage racing."

"Looking at their builds, they are big guys," Dumoulin's trainer, Adriaan Helmantel added.

"His watts per kilo took him far in the Vuelta. [He can succeed in the Tour] if he can combine that and get a good Tour parcours, like Wiggins had in 2012, with not the hardest mountain stages and a lot of time trial kilometres."

Giant-Alpecin's directeur sportif Addy Engels explained that the team must keep him grounded. Indeed, Dumoulin's collapse over the mountains to Cercedilla forced many to do the same. The Dutch journalists, whose numbers grew exponentially as the Vuelta continued, slumped lower in their seats watching stage 20.

### Force for the future

It began as a day of celebration, given how Dumoulin valiantly defended his lead over the final mountain pass to Riaza on the Thursday and how he dug deep to drop Aru by three clear seconds going up the cobbled rise to Avila on Friday. But when he failed to follow Aru's attack on the race's penultimate climb and chased fruitlessly on the descent, the frowns on the tall Dutchmen in the pressroom began to show. *De Telegraaf* headlined its next article: "Two mountains too much."

Wiggins, however, also struggled in his first Grand Tours before he was crowned the 2012 Tour king. The Dutch keep hope.

"He must select a Grand Tour to ride for the classification next year so that he does not lose precious development time," Kerckhoffs added.

"The Olympic time trial remains his goal, but he is going to use the Vuelta and the Worlds time trial as a gauge for what's possible in the 2016 Tour and Rio Olympics."

If he and the team proceed with precision, Dumoulin, who quickly regained his composure in the car seat, could after all become the much-anticipated next Dutch hero.

## THE FAST AND THE FEARLESS

## Team of the month

With the dust settling on the final Grand Tour of the season, those who've impressed make our celebrated list



CLIMBER

**TOM DUMOULIN (GIANT-ALPECIN)**

Proof that results sheets don't always tell the truth, the Dutch rider followed in the footsteps of Domenico Pozzovivo and Maxime Monfort by finishing sixth in the Vuelta, but produced one of the most impressive Grand Tour performances in years.



DOMESTIQUE

**IMANOL ERVITI (MOVISTAR)**

Alejandro Valverde's long-time domestique is one of the sport's most underrated workhorses. The tall Spaniard's commitment deserves credit for that fact it's been six years since he was part of a Grand Tour-winning team.



DOMESTIQUE

**MATTEO TRENTIN (ETIXX-QUICK STEP)**

Once a promising volleyball player, Trentin has a knack for seamlessly switching from playing a setter's role to a hitter on the bike. Assists in two Tour of Britain stage wins were followed up by a triumph of his own into Nottingham.

## TEAM LEADER

**FABIO ARU (ASTANA)**

The Italian finally secured his maiden Grand Tour win in the Vuelta. The youngest Vuelta winner since 1991, a Vincenzo Nibali-shaped problem could prevent him attempting to be the youngest Tour champion in 2016 since Alberto Contador.



TEAM CAPTAIN

**EVELYN STEVENS (BOELS-DOLMANS)**

The former Lehman Brothers employee's tireless wearing down of Lizzie Armitstead's rivals (along with team-mate Megan Guarnier) were a key factor in the Briton's win in a fantastic edition of the GP Plouay.



DOMESTIQUE

**MIKEL LANDA (ASTANA)**

It was the Spaniard's attack on the penultimate Vuelta stage that helped team-mate Fabio Aru hijack the red jersey from Tom Dumoulin. A desire for leadership is behind his move to Sky for 2016; sadly, he may already be typecast.



ALL-ROUNDER

**EDVALD BOASSON HAGEN (MTN-QHUBEKA)**

A first stage race victory since May 2013 in the Tour of Britain and a performance that showed the Norwegian's versatility: is Boasson Hagen on the verge of becoming a major player again?



SPRINTER

**FERNANDO GAVIRIA (ETIXX-QUICK STEP)**

Has cycling found its next wonderkid? Gaviria's stage win in the Tour of Britain was reminiscent of Mark Cavendish's many glories: head down, tucked position, impressive turn of speed. Aged 21, the Colombian's future looks bright.



WILD CARD

**KRISTIAN SBARAGLI (MTN-QHUBEKA)**

As first pro wins go, a stage of the Vuelta isn't a bad one. Sbaragli looked quick when he beat John Degenkolb in Castellón, but who knows what's next for the 25-year-old Italian given Mark Cavendish's likely arrival at his team?

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# Has technology gone too far?

## Jérémy Roy Inside the peloton

A breakaway legend and bunch documentarian, the ever-friendly Frenchman is now in his 13th year with FDJ

**H**ave you heard of 'Pro Cycling Manager'? It seems these days that real pro cycling is turning into a video game itself. I can't say I'm a fan; our freedom to race is already limited and this would only make it worse.

The era of 'Big Data' has definitely arrived; GPS tracker units became standard issue during the Tour de France in order for fans to follow whatever rider they wanted on a dedicated website. There were a few technical problems and the processing of data wasn't as good as it could be, but

it is only going to improve. Soon the directeur sportif sat in the car will be able to see the position of all his riders in the bunch alongside their power data.

The last few years have seen a revolution in the live broadcast of cycling. For the time being the bike-mounted cameras can't transmit live images because of poor battery life and the size of the transmission and reception units, which can't weigh too much or take up too much space. However, it's more power to the people, and I'm convinced that in the near future the TV viewer will be able to

choose exactly which rider and which cameras they want to watch.

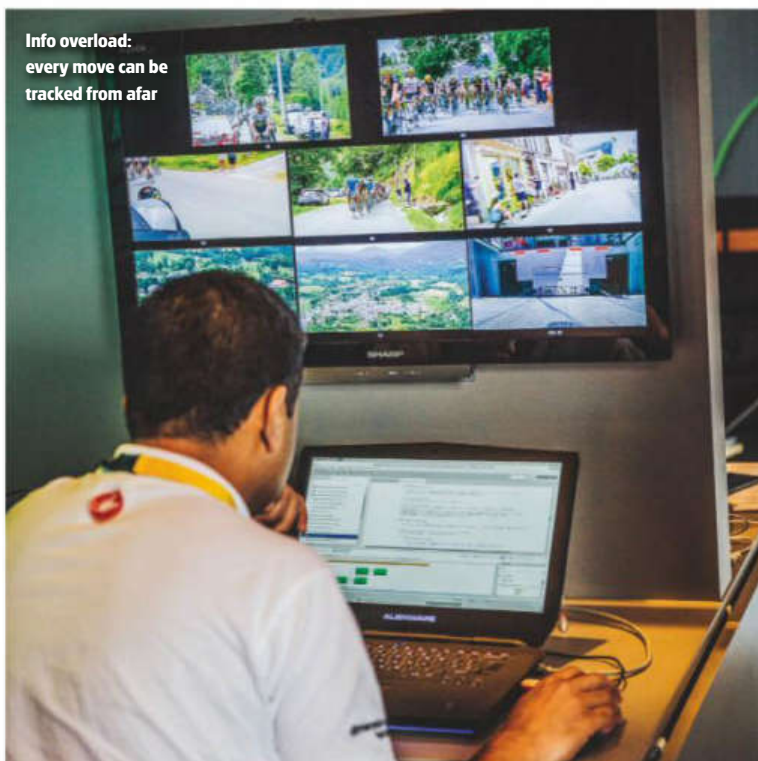
One change that has already taken place (and which sits in a grey area regarding rules) is riders using GPS computers with the race route already loaded up. I've seen teams using these devices; riders can see and anticipate the changes in direction or any lumps and bumps, plus they get preprogrammed alerts. I asked the race commissaires about it: they told me that for the time being they're letting it pass.

Of course, on the bikes themselves we've seen tests with disc brakes this season, but I've not been persuaded that the majority of the peloton will opt to ride them. Current brakes have actually got a lot better — the brake blocks are very efficient. Obviously what would be better is if everyone knew when to lift the foot off the gas and anticipate braking, but that won't change with the arrival of disc brakes. For the time being, at least until we are obligated by sponsors to use them, I don't think they'll catch on in a big way.

What's next? I think we'll soon see hi-tech helmets with sensors to detect temperature, hydration, heart rate, and maybe with an integrated radio. We'll start to see some considerable effort put into nutrition and recovery too — we're pretty much in the Stone Age with all that at the moment. Ours is an era of customisation; why not then have everyone measure his or her specific energy expenditure and then nutrition intake?

But you know what I would like to see? We've already got so many sensors and electronic gizmos on our bikes, I would love to have permanent lights in the seat tube, simply so that when we're racing or training we can be seen better!

**Info overload:**  
every move can be  
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# Oltre modern Bianchi

## Steven Kruijswijk's Tour of Britain bike

**THE RIDER:**  
Steven Kruijswijk  
**Age:** 28  
**Height:** 1.78m  
**Weight:** 66kg

**Richard Abraham**

**F**or the first time since the days of the Mercatone Uno squad in the late 1990s, that so-wrong-it's-right combination of yellow and celeste is back in the bunch.

For cycling fans of a certain age, this writer included, the first thing the LottoNL-Jumbo Bianchi Oltre XR2 makes you think of is the Bianchi ridden by Marco Pantani when he won the Giro d'Italia and Tour de France in 1998.

However, the modern sculpted carbon-fibre lines of the Oltre, belonging to climber Steven Kruijswijk for the Tour of Britain, are a far cry from the lithe alloy tubes of Pantani's Mega Pro XL. They feature a chunky front end and a curved top tube that links the headset to the rear brakes, while the slender seat stays help dampen vibration and the thick chainstays offer stiffness under force from the bottom bracket.

The most obvious nods to aerodynamics are the seat tube, which is shaped to accommodate the rear wheel, and the curved wings of the integrated carbon stem and handlebars from FSA, which are colour coordinated with dynamic blocks of celeste.

The Dutch team formerly known as Belkin, Blanco and Rabobank have kitted their bikes out with the most popular groupset in the professional ranks: 11-speed Shimano Dura-Ace Di2, in this case with a 53/39 chainset and 11-28 cassette. C50 carbon wheels with

Vittoria Corsa SC tubulars, plus a Pioneer power meter, finish it off with a smattering of classy yellow touches. There's no Campagnolo in sight.

The Italian firm's leading road model is very much designed with the mass market in mind. As such, in order to make the bike race-ready for the Tour of Britain, the mechanics have had to delve into their toolbox to dig out the one thing every pro team spanner man swears by: zip-ties. Here they have been used to keep the electrical wire feeding into the rear derailleur and the race transponder nice and neat, while also attaching Kruijswijk's climbing shifters to the handlebars. With a Tour of Britain route that covered North Wales, Southern Scotland and the Pennines, they will have seen plenty of action.



Mechanics have scribbled Kruijswijk's race number in felt pen



The sculpted carbon handlebars require zip-ties to mount Shimano's climbing shifters



Pioneer power meter measures the efforts



#### Steven Kruijswijk's Bianchi

**Frame:** Bianchi Oltre XR2

**Fork:** Bianchi carbon

**Brakes:** Shimano Dura-Ace dual pivot

**Front derailleur:** Shimano Dura-Ace Di2 11-speed

**Rear derailleur:** Shimano Dura-Ace Di2 11-speed

**Shifters:** Shimano Dura-Ace Di2 11-speed (with climbing buttons)

**Chainset:** Shimano Dura-Ace Di2 9000 11-speed 53-39

**Power meter:** Pioneer SGY-PM90

**Cassette:** Shimano Dura-Ace Di2 11-speed 11-28t

**Wheels:** Shimano Dura-Ace C50 tubular

**Bars/stem:** FSA Plasma

**Tyres:** Vittoria Corsa SC

**Pedals:** Shimano Dura-Ace

**Saddle:** Selle San Marco

## INTERNET UNREST

# Don't strike, tweet

Why riders take to social media to air their complaints

Nick Bull

**T**he rider protest is dead: long live angry social media posts! The days of riders striking as per the 1966 and 1998 Tours de France appear to be on the wane, as Twitter increasingly becomes the go-to place for professionals to lobby the UCI.

"Why having a massage when you can be on the highway... still 160 km to go," wrote Lotto-Soudal's André Greipel in a tweet directed at the governing body and race organisers during a 250-kilometre transfer during this year's Tour of Britain.

His team-mate Marcel Sieberg and Sky's Peter Kennaugh also used Twitter to voice their disdain for the amount of travelling during the race (posts that were also favoured and retweeted by other riders in the event), seemingly as a strength-in-numbers movement gained traction.

This method of riders publicising their opinions isn't new. Looking back to the snow-affected Milan-San Remo in 2013, Lotto-Soudal's Adam Hansen described the peloton as being treated like "animals in the zoo" on Twitter. However, it's the closest any rider came to venting their frustration about having to race in such weather.

Compare that to the stage of this year's Tour of Oman which was neutralised because of temperatures of around 40°C: BMC's Brent Bookwalter used Twitter to say that the situation was "another prime example" of the UCI's need to introduce an extreme weather protocol, while Fabian Cancellara used his 140 characters to say that there were "limits" to conditions he would race in.

Then there was the crash caused by unmarked bollards on the road at the Tour of the Basque Country. "Big fault of the organisation," wrote Philippe Gilbert, while Alberto Contador retweeted a post from Movistar's Fran Ventoso that read: "I'm outraged, does nobody care about cyclists? Where are those who defend us and review race routes?"



## Rational thinking

There seems to be rational thinking behind riders' decision to use social network sites in this way. As Greipel explained about his upset over the Tour of Britain transfers: "I just hope that the UCI is taking notice." The way in which many people consume news in 2015 — in bite-size, 140 character chunks — and the large Twitter following many riders have are two other major factors.

There are still professional channels where riders can air their concerns: the CPA (Cyclistes Professionnels Associés) is led by former pro Gianni Bugno, enlists other ex-riders to act as intermediaries between organisers and the peloton at WorldTour races, and publishes its feedback throughout the season.

The CPA helped to arrange a five-minute rider protest in the Basque

"The days of riders going on strike appear to be on the wane"

**Above:** Luca Paolini checks his status at the 2014 Tour de France

Country after the aforementioned crash (albeit with the help of an invite to riders posted on social media), but its delayed response to Peter Sagan's collision with a motorcycle in the Vuelta a España didn't go down well.

"There's not even a press release/statement about the incident with Sagan," bemoaned Marcel Kittel after the incident.

"We as riders have to expect more from CPA as our representatives."

And where did he air his frustration? Twitter, of course.

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# Pick of the bunch

## HED GT3 wheel

You know a wheel's good when professional teams (including Sky) are willing to bypass equipment sponsors and pay to get them on their TT bikes. This GT3 wheel is an updated version of the H3; a wheel that HED reckons has been behind more overall Grand Tour podiums than any other wheel. The stunning tri-spoke wheel comes with a titanium skewer and a wider rim to cater for 21 and 23mm tyres.

[www.hedwheels.com](http://www.hedwheels.com), £1,199, \$1,500



### Garmin Edge 1000 computer

Surely the ultimate cycle computer, the Edge 1000 is the training companion for the data junkie. As well as all the usual data metrics, it includes built-in maps, smartphone connectivity, and can even tell you the balance in power between your left and right leg (when connected to Garmin Vector pedals), and much, much more.

[www.garmin.com](http://www.garmin.com), £439.99, \$499.99

### Kask Bambino Pro helmet

Redesigned for 2015 with an improved retention system and magnetic attachment for the visor, the Kask Bambino Pro looks set to retain its place as the benchmark for all short-tailed time trial helmets.

[www.velobrands.co.uk](http://www.velobrands.co.uk), £299

[www.highwaytwo.com](http://www.highwaytwo.com), \$499



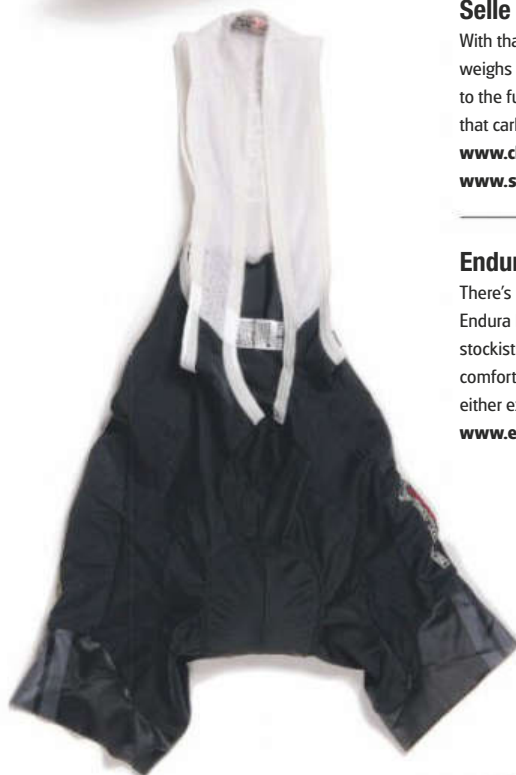


### Selle Italia SLR Tekno Flow saddle

With that massive cut-out, it's no surprise that the Selle Italia SLR Tekno Flow weighs close to nothing; only 102g more than nothing in fact. This is thanks to the full carbon shell and rails, and the minimalist padding that sits atop all that carbon.

[www.chickencycles.co.uk](http://www.chickencycles.co.uk), £299

[www.selleitalia.com](http://www.selleitalia.com), \$499



### Endura FS260-Pro SL shorts

There's no one chamois pad that will suit all riders, so with this in mind Endura has given these shorts three different chamois widths (Endura stockists should be able to help you decide which you need) to ensure comfort for all shapes and sizes. There's even a long leg option if you're either exceptionally tall or a dedicated follower of cycling fashion.

[www.endurasport.com](http://www.endurasport.com), £99.99, \$179.99

### Schwalbe One tubular tyres

While the tubeless version of Schwalbe's flagship tyres made their WorldTour debut on the bike of Sylvain Chavanel at this year's Paris-Roubaix, there's still plenty of room for traditional tyre technology. These Schwalbe One tubulars, highly popular in the peloton, are still made using needle and thread at the company's factory in Indonesia.

[www.schwalbe.com](http://www.schwalbe.com), £79.99

[www.schwalbetires.com](http://www.schwalbetires.com), \$136.21





Adam Hansen:  
tireless Aussie

## NEED TO KNOW

# The month that was

Happenings from a busy end-of-season

### Nick Bull

**G**as and electricity provider **Direct Energie** gave a much-needed boost to the Europcar team in September, as the Paris-based company was announced as the squad's title sponsor for 2016.

With Europcar's involvement with the team about to end, and riders such as Pierre Rolland heading elsewhere for next season (Cannondale-Garmin in his case), it appeared that Jean-René Bernaudeau's long-standing squad was on the brink of closure.

No financial details or sponsorship length were disclosed, although **Bernaudeau signed up Sylvain Chavanel** and expressed his desire for the team to rejoin the WorldTour.

Tours are what Lotto-Soudal's **Adam Hansen** has spent a fair amount of his time riding. The 34-year-old Australian finished this year's Vuelta, the 13th consecutive Grand Tour he has completed, to break Spaniard Bernardo Ruiz's record of 12, which had stood since 1958.

However, Hansen will not be among the first inductees into **Cycling Australia's Hall of**

**Fame**, which will launch in November. The federation's rules stipulate that riders will only be considered two years after their retirement.

One rider who has just hung up his wheels is American **Ted King**, who bowed out of the sport after the **GP de Montréal** on September 13. The 32-year-old Cannondale-Garmin rider, who climbed off his bike part way through the race held in inclement conditions, never won a pro race and was famously eliminated from the 2013 Tour de France for not making the time cut despite riding the team time trial injured and on a road bike.

There will be three races against the clock in next year's **Giro d'Italia**, as organiser RCS announced that the race will include a trio of individual time trials. One will be on the Giro's opening day in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, another will be a rolling 40-kilometre test through the spectacular Chianti vineyards.

The best whine CS came across this month was from **Mark Cavendish**, who described the **Vuelta** as "stupid" due to its 11 mountaintop finishes. Despite having a point, he later said his words were "media exaggerated".

## BELGIAN BEER OF THE MONTH

### Deus Brut des Flandres

The French town of Epernay has hosted a Tour de France stage start twice in the last four years, and it's from there that this Belgian beer obtains its distinctive taste. Originating from the family-run Bosteels Brewery in Buggenhout, East Flanders, it is refined into this sparkling, delicate tippable by using the French town's famed Champagne-making techniques. Deus's taste is comparable to a sprinter's mental make-up — delicate and complex — and its 11.5 per cent strength means one bottle could easily give you delusions of grandeur. Just like some sprinters too.

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# The Worlds goes global

## Graham Watson Life through the lens

A race-snapping legend with more than 30 years on the scene and over 20 books on pro cycling. Check his latest shots at [grahamwatson.com](http://grahamwatson.com)

It's not often that a World Championships takes place away from its European heartland, and so rare that it takes place in the USA. What's even nicer for me is that I missed the last American Worlds in 1986, in Colorado Springs, which means even I am breaking new ground in 2015!

Seeing as how a 'foreign' Worlds comes around even less often than an Olympic Games, it's easy to recall the five I have been to. The 1981 Worlds in Czechoslovakia (considered 'foreign' because it was still communist) was where I first met Phil Liggett, a charming icon who quickly put this youngster at ease. 1990 in Japan was remembered for its intense humidity, where a litre of freezing cold Sapporo beer was the only antidote to a solid day's work. Japan was where I had to persuade a young passenger queuing for a BA flight to London to take my undeveloped films with her. She did, with a cheque for £50, and was met by a courier when she landed, which meant *Cycling Weekly* (sister magazine of *Cycle Sport*) got its images on time.

In 1995, the Worlds went all the way to Bogota, Colombia, a city where hearing gunshots at night in the streets soon became an unremarkable thing. The road events took place four hours away in Duitama, where Miguel Indurain won the TT and Abraham Olano won the road race. I also remember that Worlds for the manner in which *Cycling Weekly* got its images. While at the track events in Bogota, I'd befriended a wealthy photographer who lived and worked in the highly protected area of the city where diplomats hid. The same photographer found a driver to bring me

back from Duitama in the middle of the night after the road races had ended, in order to process my film. I was told to lie on the back seat and sleep for four hours, yet I lay awake as the stranger drove, for I'd seen the handgun he was hiding beneath the poncho he wore. We were never attacked, the films got developed, and the best images scanned in and emailed to London on time. I believe this was the first-ever 'digital' image emailed to *Cycling Weekly*.

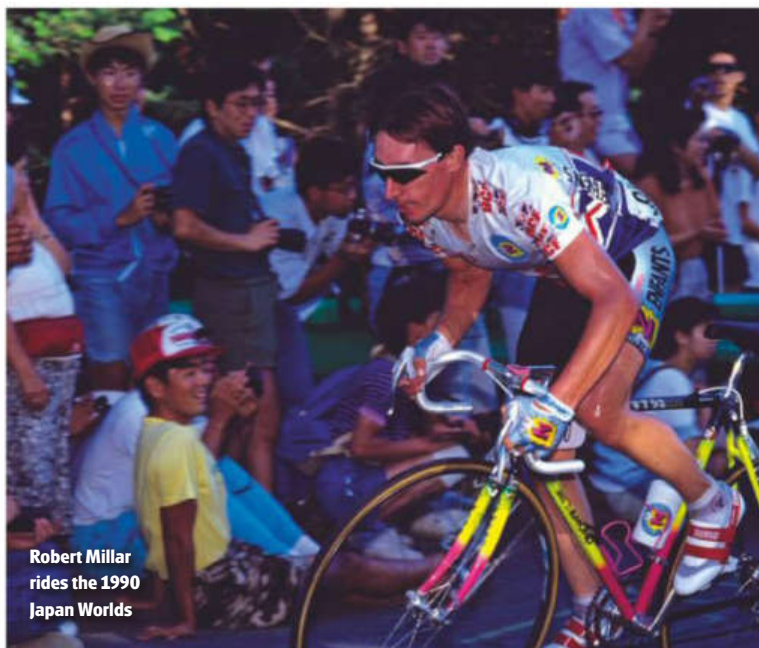
### Down under

Until now, 2010 was the last time the Worlds travelled away from Europe, and Australia is about as far as they could go! I'll remember the men's road race mainly for the 23-minute gap an escape

gained as the race went from the start in Melbourne to the circuit in Geelong, 70km away. This was when trade teams were objecting to the proposed ban on race radios, and the road race was one event when they were banned.

Had the escape reached the circuit and done a full lap before the peloton got there, someone from the break would have been crowned champion, because the officials would have had to eliminate the peloton. But with no radios on that long open road, there was no way to tell the chasers to chase.

It took some pleading from the top UCI official to get the managers to drive into the peloton and tell their riders to chase, and eventually the gap closed to 21 minutes, meaning the peloton would arrive in Geelong before the escape had completed its first lap, but it was a close call!



Robert Millar rides the 1990 Japan Worlds

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## ANY QUESTIONS?

# Anna van der Breggen

The Dutchwoman tells *CS* about how she got into cycling, her motivations and her love of ice cream

## **CS Tell us how you started cycling.**

My brother raced, and when I was seven I went with him. Before the real races, there were races for the younger children, and I competed. I was just as serious as all the bigger riders, but I was nervous. In my first race, I had a flat tyre and I didn't know what to do; I couldn't ride my bike, so I just walked to the finish, crying.

## **CS How good was your brother?**

He was pretty good as a junior, but he chose his studies, so he quit cycling. My youngest brother tried, and my sister, but they're not really into it, so I don't really have a supportive family. They like to watch me, but that's it!

## **CS When did you realise you were any good at it?**

I was not a bad cyclist when I was younger. I won some races and was in the national selection. But my first race with women was in the rain. It was long and different from what I was used to, and after that I thought maybe I should quit.

## **CS Really? What changed?**

I had never trained to the maximum, and in the winter of 2011 I wanted to see if I could make it. I made a schedule for myself and people were laughing about it, as I had never trained seriously. I got a bit angry at that, so I did every training session and when the season started, in 2012, I noticed such a big difference. Then I thought I could be at the top of women's cycling.

## **CS You only fully committed to cycling last year. Why was that?**

Because I chose to go to school, study and get a degree. I chose to be a nurse, so I had to succeed in doing that. Also, especially in women's cycling, you never know what's going to happen.

## **CS Why did you pick nursing?**

At first I studied to be a sport therapist and I liked the medical part but not the therapy; it was a bit strange for me. I didn't want to do university, because I also wanted to cycle. Nursing is also a medical thing and taking care of people suits me.

## **CS Did you ever think about what you'd do if you weren't cycling?**

Probably something in endurance sport. I would really like to do a triathlon. I like soccer but I don't know if I'm good at it... I've just never thought about it really.

## **CS Any regrets about being late to full-time cycling?**

I'm a cyclist who took time to develop and get stronger. I'm not like Marianne [Vos]. The first race she did with the women, she won; the first race I did with the women, I thought I would quit. I liked the student life, that's something you like or you don't, and those things make you who you are. I don't regret it.

## **CS Which was your breakthrough race?**

There is not really one race where you can say you are 'there', but the Worlds in 2012 was the first time people in cycling saw me. The Worlds is important because it's on television in Holland and people watch it, so I think those two factors are important. This year it would be La Course, which is a small step and a big step at once.

## **CS What about your most memorable performance?**

I don't know. I do so many races, but one stage at the Tour of Norway last year I felt so strong. I don't know what the feeling was, but I could attack and not get tired at all. That really motivated me, so I

"I felt, 'I'm going to win this race,' and it was a cool feeling"

Above: Van der Breggen at the 2105 Tour of Norway

attacked again on a flat part and won. It was the first time I felt, 'I'm going to win this race,' and it was a cool feeling.

## **CS All that success takes a lot of work. Who do you train with when you're at home?**

If I'm doing short sessions or power training, then it's good to be alone with some music. When it's normal training, I like to take someone. Almost all my friends have bikes, so if it's possible I go out with them. My sister-in-law is a cyclist; she quit this year, but before that I did a lot of training with her.

## **CS What do you get up to when you're not racing or training?**

I have a niece of two years and a nephew of six months. If you disappear for three weeks, they have changed, so every time I'm home I go to see them and see some friends. I like to play piano but there is not much time for it. I like normal stuff like reading, visiting people and going out for a drink in the city.

## **CS You sound like a family person.**

Yes. I love to come home for dinner with the family, with fries and probably dessert after. My mum makes healthy food especially for me, but out of the season or after a big race I come home and say, 'Mum, just do the normal.' I eat with the rest and I eat ice cream — that's the best.

Interview by Owen Rogers



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# Letters

## Star letter...

### BACK TO BASICS

After reading an article regarding training software, I understand the use of power meters on the pro circuit as a way of keeping track of the riders' performance and fitness — the risk of taking a cyclist in poor form to a Grand Tour is minimised. But for an amateur (racer or not), surely cycling should be a fun and joyous way to stay healthy?

A consistent concern about watts while riding around the local villages is surely just a distraction from riding for pleasure, enjoying the scenery and taking time out from our increasingly busy and hectic lifestyles.

As Nietzsche wrote: "Without a continual falsification of the world

by means of numbers, mankind could not exist." Well, I prefer my world to feel real, and that includes the pain of climbing for the view and the exhilaration of speeding on two thin wheels through the beautiful English countryside.

*Matthew Bright, Andover*



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**LETTER OF THE MONTH:**  
**Wins a pair of Lazer Magneto M1 sunglasses**  
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### Fair take on Froome

I must admit, I expected your feature 'How Froome won the Tour', (September 2015) to be just a bunch of gushing accolades about how unbeatable he is.

Instead, you did a wonderful job focusing not just on what he and Team Sky did to ride their best race, but also on how other teams and Movistar in particular let it happen with their deliberately conservative tactics.

This is the other way that cycling is a team sport: a team-mate's ambitions for third can come at the expense of going for an overall win. It's a side of team tactics that doesn't always get the spotlight, and your insightful coverage should help

convince anyone who still doubts that cycling isn't just about the team leader.

*Greg Emerson, Brooklyn, NY*

### ToB is top for sprints

The Tour of Britain will never match the most acclaimed races for grandeur and prestige, but this year it managed to deliver something no other race did: a succession of sprinting stages. And how great it was to have some of the world's fastest men (André Greipel, Mark Cavendish and Elia Viviani) battling it out with emerging stars (Fernando Gaviria) and forgotten names (Edvald Boasson Hagen). The Grand Tours should take note.

*Eric Bramble, Isle of Skye*

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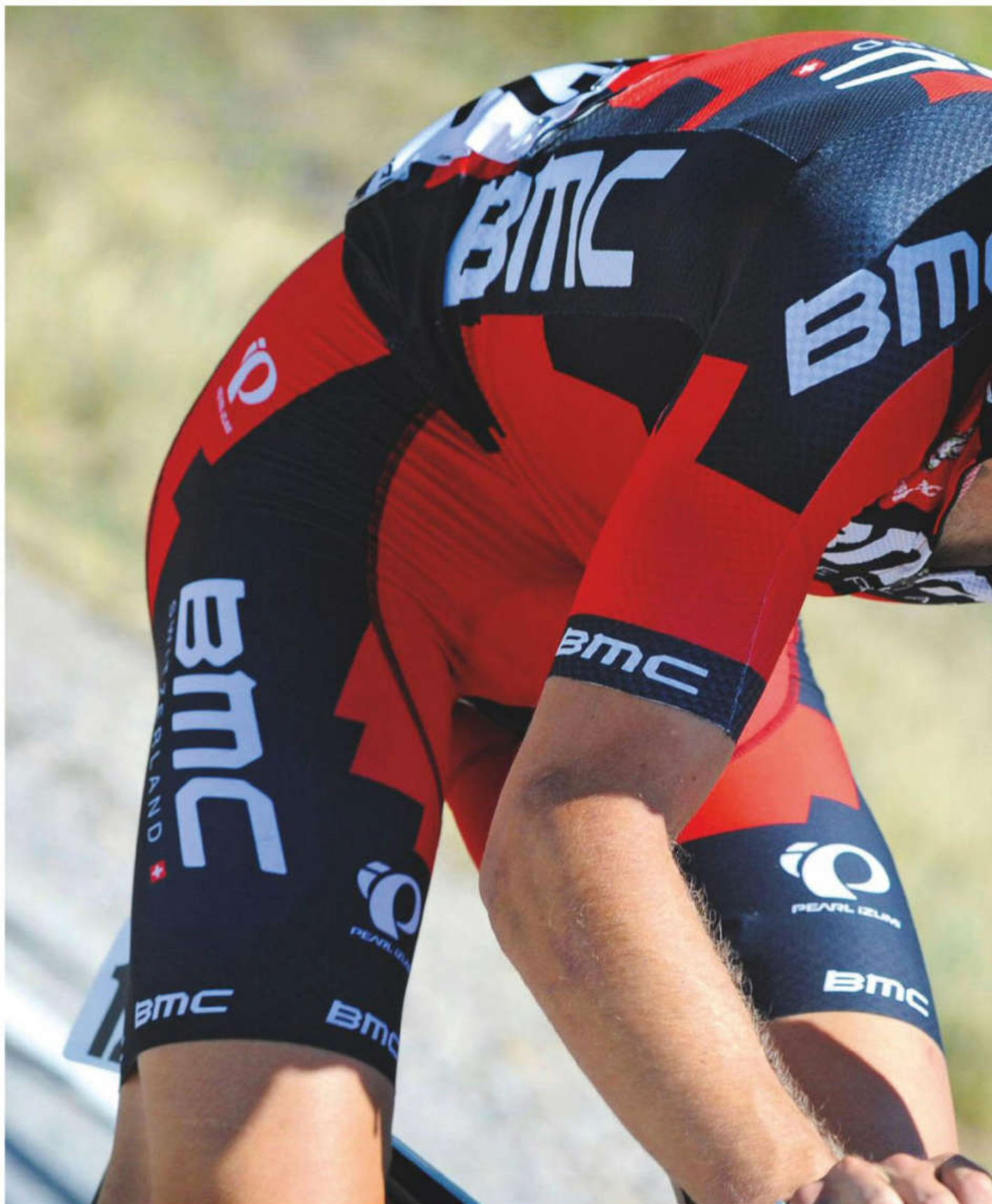
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# The comeback kid

Words Sophie Smith  
Photos Graham Watson, Cor Vos,  
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**E**ven during the lowest points of his 15-month recovery from a horrific leg injury Taylor Phinney would regularly go off on whimsical tangents, innocently designed to entertain. But not today.

The 25-year-old American is on the massage table as he speaks in a tacitly measured tone about his race comeback from a high-speed crash at the US Road National Championships in May 2014, in which he suffered an open compound leg fracture and all but destroyed his left knee.

Phinney's consistent tone is surprising not least because of the nature of his return ride at August's Tour of Utah in which he finished third in the opening road stage behind compatriots Kiel Reijnen (UnitedHealthcare) and Alex Howes (Cannondale-Garmin).

The minor placing was met with applause from the cycling community, which there and then determined the gregarious American was back. Phinney's stage victory on the opening day of the Tour of Colorado some two weeks later served as further confirmation that his potentially career-ending battle was over.

However, the former national champion who initially had no return date to competition — the end of 2014 was first mooted before March 2015, then shifted to the Tour of California in May before Phinney was finally ready in August 2015 — has played down his performances, choosing instead to let his legs do the talking.

"I didn't expect that I was going to come out swinging quite as hard as I did on the first day, but that's what I wanted to do," Phinney tells *Cycle Sport* of his Utah showing.

"It was more for me, it wasn't to prove anything to anyone, I just wanted to come back and be as close [to my

form before the accident] as I can physically while still having a fair amount of road left to travel in my recovery," he continued.

Recovery, despite the results and plaudits, is still a very real process for BMC's star of the future, and perhaps why the comeback in Utah was, until he reached the finish line, deliberately understated.

"I wanted my first race to be in the US largely because it's a little less stressful in the US when it comes to positioning and acceleration, the roads are bigger and the efforts are a bit more constant," he says. "Accelerations are something that I have struggled with over the last year just because, you know, tendon ligaments are fragile and I haven't done so much speed work.

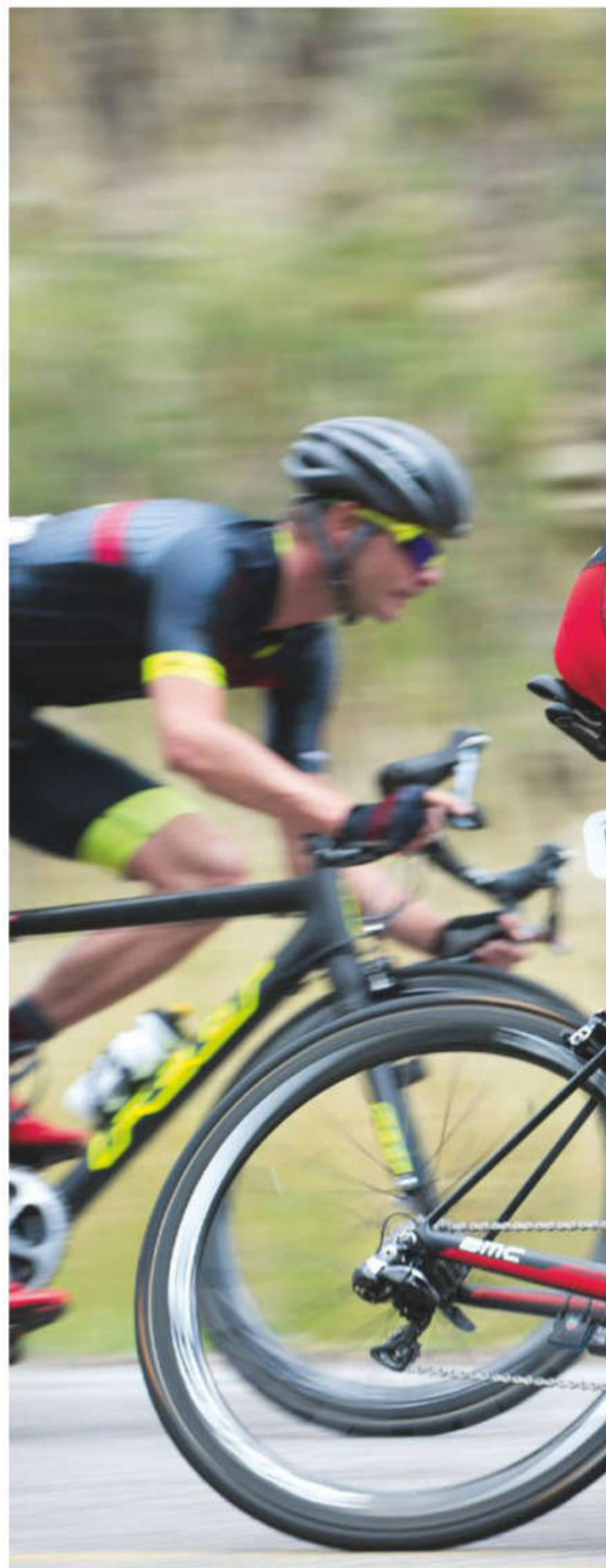
"I talked to the team and probably could have done California, in retrospect, but I wouldn't have gone there and felt really comfortable. I didn't want to just come back to a bike race and get destroyed because I was maybe overweight or not fit enough."

He continues: "I was excited that the team gave me enough time to then focus on Utah. It was kind of a quiet goal in my mind; I was just working week-by-week and trying to stay on top of little problems that would maybe flare out. I had the option, even the week before, to not do Utah."

### The artist within

Phinney had 15 months to think about his return to not only a sport but a life that, previous to the accident, he knew little else outside of.

Physical rehabilitation for a period was a full-time occupation. When it eased slightly, the BMC time trial and Spring Classics specialist found a temporary outlet in flying lessons and then a new talent in painting at a Boulder, Colorado apartment, which he



**"I didn't want to just come back to a bike race and get destroyed because I was overweight or not fit enough"**







**“It was just part of racing a bike  
— when you go hard you don’t think  
about anything except for the pain”**

bought when he couldn’t return to Europe for the season.

He remains philosophical about that period, which he says changed him. But he was able to relinquish the paintbrush with apparent ease to begin longer training blocks designed to test the strain his scarred left knee and leg could take in the build to Utah.

“The desire to create is always there but the physical ability is not,” he says. “It’s something I wish I could do with my mind and I didn’t have to use my body at all, because you get home from a ride and you turn into a zombie in recovery mode.

“I remember a couple of weeks ago I’d done a big training day and I was on the couch getting all this inspiration to paint something. I got into the art room, lifted the brush, did one brush stroke and was exhausted, so I can’t do it.”

It’s a testament to Phinney’s mental toughness that he never considered putting aside the bike as he has the flying lessons or art tools.

He doesn’t admit to being nervous at the beginning of Utah, and at first that’s hard to believe if for no other reason than the amount of time away he’s had on the sidelines to contemplate his future. “It got closer and closer to Utah

and it started becoming more of a reality,” he says. “Honestly, for me, it was just like, OK, this is part of the next step.

“I wasn’t allowing myself to get super excited. I wasn’t allowing myself to relax into it, you know, because I do have to be very attentive.

“But what was really cool, gratifying and also humbling was to see how excited my close friends and my family got, and a lot of the cycling community got with my return. I don’t think I was really expecting that.”

The only difference in the race, Phinney maintains, was him. During the rehabilitation process he had to consider life without cycling and, however temporary, it has left a mark.

“I wasn’t thinking, ‘oh, this work that I’ve done has led me to this,’” he reveals. “You get into the final of a race like that and it’s raining and you’re attacking and trying to bridge to the front group and you’re not thinking about anything else.

“That’s a really beautiful thing that I don’t think I was necessarily present to before, it was just part of the job, or part of racing a bike — when you go hard you don’t think about anything except for the pain.”

“But there’s also a blissful component to being able to only feel

pain and think of nothing else, and that was something that I started to cherish a couple of months after my injury, when I could go out on my bike and I could start to push.

“The harder I was able to push on my bike the less my brain was able to bounce around and think about everything else.

“It’s the purest form of escape that we all kind of search for in a lot of different aspects of life... I wasn’t in tune with that until I had this accident and it was taken away temporarily.”

### Back to the routine

Phinney had clocked 2,139.2km of racing between the Tours of Utah, Colorado and Britain when the USA team for the September UCI Road World Championships in Richmond, Virginia was announced.

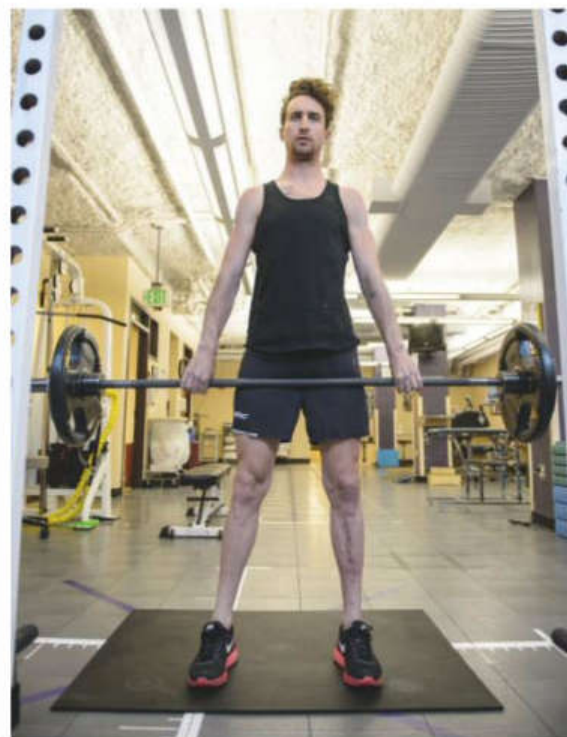
He had been speaking to the national team prior to the announcement in which he was named for both the elite men’s road race and time trial.

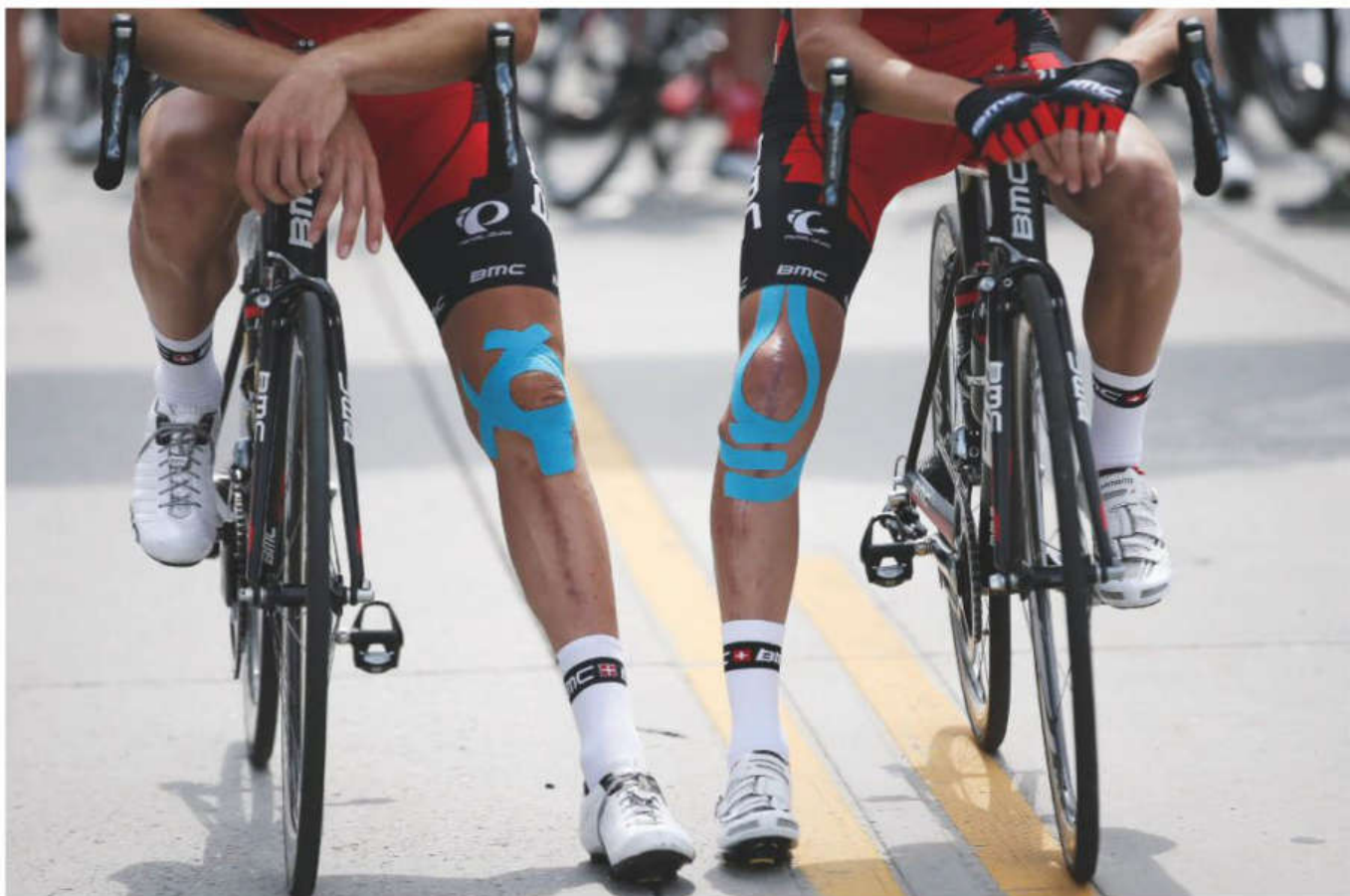
Phinney holds the world titles in the same high regard as the Olympic

**Above** Phinney with his BMC team-mates at this year’s US Pro Challenge

**Left** Strapping on his left knee hides the full extent of his scars

**Below** Phinney still has weekly physical therapy sessions





Games and Spring Classics, so selection means something more than race kilometres in the legs prior to a pivotal 2016 season.

He finished fourth in both the Olympic road race and the time trial at London 2012 and is likely to have some aspirations for Rio and maybe, before that, a Tour de France debut, which he had to put on hold this July. Phinney's contract with BMC is also up for renewal next season.

When asked of his goals, however, he is again measured in response. "The team [BMC] is already trying to plan my early season next year and I'm like 'just pump the brakes for a second,'" he laughs. "Let me just get back on the horse and then we'll see how she runs.

"There have been ups and downs but largely it's been a really supportive environment. The fact that they were so hands-off, in a good sense, in allowing me to follow what I needed to do in the months and months leading up to returning to racing I'm really grateful for.

"It's one thing to be stressing about your own injury and your own return to

#### Recovery process

## Managing expectations

BMC Racing doctor Max Testa is unsure if Taylor Phinney will be able to compete with full range of motion and no pain in his left leg in 2016, despite a brief but successful end-of-year comeback.

"I think that probably the end of this season or early part of next season we will have a clear idea of how much of the symptoms are going to stay with him," Testa says. "We hope nothing at all but you have to be realistic. An injury like that is not just an injury that involves the joint but also the soft tissue, so it's hard to predict how much soreness or how much pain you have left."

Testa believes the worst part of Phinney's physical recovery from a fractured tibia, sliced patella and severed tendon is, however, behind him. "Mechanically, he has a very good recovery, he showed that in recent performances so we're very happy with that. The knee is going to require, for a long time, at least for as long as he's going to race as a professional cyclist, a little extra dedication.

"That includes what to do on and off the bike, maintaining range of motion, good strength in muscle and good balance in the pedal stroke," he continues. "He has to respect progression in the training, not to do big jumps in his training so the joint can adapt."

racing but then when you have others involved, they're also throwing their pressure into the pile — then it gets really difficult, so I'm glad I haven't had to deal with any of that in the last couple of months."

Phinney was following a "pretty

**Above** The American (left) says he still has a long way to go to get his leg back to his pre-injury level

normal" training regime leading up to home races in Utah and Colorado.

"Back to the life, which is OK!" he says with no hint of sadness that in previous interviews throughout his recovery has crept into tone.

"I'm just happy to be doing what



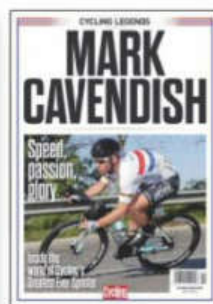
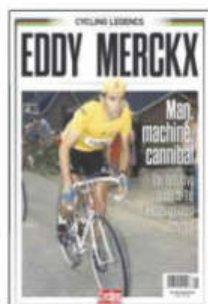
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I'm doing. It's interesting doing all of these interviews because it's all about, how excited I am to be back, and what's different, and what I've learned.

"There's just so much that goes through my brain when I'm trying to answer these questions but the general consensus is that, I like the word jazzed, I'm jazzed," he says.

"I haven't really looked back on anything because I feel like I'm still in it, still pretty heavily involved in the recovery process, which is maybe why I have difficulty talking about being quote end quote 'back'," he adds.

"I don't feel like I am 100 per cent back. I still deal with so much stuff on my left side, that it is like if a time comes that I can race my bike and really not have to think about the therapy I'm getting every day then I think I'll be back.

"I'm enjoying being at the races, I think it's really fun for me to be able to race, but it's still part of this whole comeback. When that point of 'fully back' will be I think is still a little way down the line but I am back to racing and that is something to me."

### Taking on the world

Patience has proved to be one of Phinney's virtues and it will have to continue to be in the immediate future, which still includes weekly physical rehabilitation sessions.

"Therapy is a whole other animal, I have to really stay on top of the therapy, which is mentally pretty draining, but you just have to do it in order to be able to race," he says.

"I still have soreness in nearly every pedal stroke but there are all these different levels of pain that you become

### Training partners

## Group therapy

The Morton brothers, Lachlan and Gus, who both ride for American squad Jelly Belly p/b Maxxis, as well as Australian Joe Lewis were an integral part of Taylor Phinney's long-awaited race return at the Tour of Utah. The trio served as training partners and sounding boards in the last couple of months leading up to the comeback, and he credits them each for it.

Lewis moved to Boulder, Colorado earlier this year where he struck up a friendship with Phinney. The 26-year-old has contended with his own knee injury since February and so could relate to the American's hindrances and help either motivate him, or be motivated.

"At a Continental level I don't really have the luxury of being able to take a year off to fix an injury and still expect to get paid the following year," the Hincapie Racing Team rider says. "Taylor's been a really good source of support for me with my stuff having seen him go through such a big injury."

The pair did the miles but Lewis emphasises a relaxed approach to training that sometimes included lunch or even a beer afterwards.

"Generally Taylor has been pretty laid back throughout the year. I think there were definitely a couple of times I talked him off the ledge in regards to his knee," Lewis says.

"Before Utah he was having a bad knee day. He'd just come out of his physical therapy session and he wasn't going to do a one-hour ride. His knee wasn't feeling good and he didn't know if he was going to do Utah.

"What was going to be a one-hour ride and then go home and sulk turned into five hours of really good training on a nice hot day. We ended up riding into Denver, had some lunch. It takes the seriousness away, which you experience when you're at races. It's nice to ride your bike just for the fun of it."



**"When that point of being 'fully back' will be is still a little way down the line"**

really cognisant of, whether it's a good pain or a bad pain or soreness or an ache or an acute pain.

"I'm trying to avoid that acute, doing damage to myself, sort of pain, whereas the soreness just comes from the amount of trauma and also the lack of strength on my left side. I definitely have a long way to go with training my left leg back to where it was.

"I've always been a little bit right-side dominant but it takes about two years from the accident according to most of the doctors I've talked to, to get back to that initial level of strength."

How that translates at a 'home' World Championships and beyond, through winter and into next season remains to be seen. The point is though that Phinney is there.

"I do realise that I am a person who is good for team morale and the general atmosphere, so I step back into that role, and was even able to contribute more than I was able to contribute in the past," he says.

"I have a deeper respect and perspective that I can bring to all of these situations as professional cyclists, which are really pretty minimal in comparison to a lot of other struggles that people go through."

**Above** After 15 months away from racing, Phinney was back to winning and back on the podium  
**Right** An ecstatic Phinney secures his first win since his injury on home soil

END







# Burgeoning technologies

After disc brakes made their first appearance in the pro peloton this year, we take a look at what else the UCI may or may not allow onto cycling's top table in the not-too-distant future

Words Hugh Gladstone Photos Chris Catchpole

**T**here was an air of inevitability about the arrival of disc brakes in the professional peloton this summer. On mountain bikes, cyclo-crossers, touring machines and e-bikes, disc brakes have become either the norm or at least a popular option.

They'd also been appearing with ever higher frequency on road bikes, and it was felt it was only a matter of time before the UCI would bow to pressure from the cycle industry and allow them in to the favoured showcase that is the world of pro racing. Because disc brakes have only been introduced under trial conditions, there's not yet any guarantee that they're here to stay. Even so, despite the grumbles, safety concerns and purported lack of demand, it seems a fairly good bet.

With disc brakes being far from the only cycling industry trend that's been working its way through the pipeline, we take a look at three other burgeoning technologies that may or may not be making their presence felt in professional racing sometime soon.

#### **Smoothing out the bumps: micro-suspension and shock-absorption**

There's nothing new about the idea of shock-absorption on road bikes. The desire to make a ride more comfortable is as old as the bike itself. Pneumatic tyres, fork rake, frame materials, carbon layering, tube shape, geometry, spoke patterns, saddle rails and bar tape have all been developed over the years with a role in soaking up the bumps. But so integral are all these features to a modern-day bike that their function in this field is easily overlooked. On the other hand, the overall failure of more visible, radical suspension devices on bikes to catch on, e.g. RockShox forks at Paris-Roubaix, Allsop Softride beams and Bianchi's bizarre suspension bike — points to a notion that the road bike is already where it needs to be in terms of smoothing out a ride. But if that's the case, how come we are seeing moderate suspension and shock-absorption devices appearing on more bikes?





Canyon's concept bike features exotic carbon springs and magneto-rheological dampers

French manufacturer Time is one company with a particular interest in this field. Last year it launched its Aktiv forks, which borrow a gadget from the motoring industry to reduce vibrations.

"Since the very beginning of Time, we've been interested in the comfort of our bikes," says CEO Marie-Pierre

**"Canyon's concept bike features electronically controlled suspension: the firm promises this is a big up and coming theme for the future"**

Pradeau, "Ten years ago we started to work on vibration because we know that's a main thing that's going to improve comfort and performance.

"The mass damper is very common in the automotive industry, but this is the first time anyone has done it on the bike."

Subtly hidden away inside the fork, the damper is a small block of cast iron suspended on a spring, that vibrates in a way that helps to absorb and counter vibrations from the road.

"We see a lot of very positive feedback," says Pradeau. "Users are all amazed by the sensation they get, especially downhill. You feel very linked to the road. It's much more relaxed."

With such positive results, Time has no intention of stopping at the forks.

"We know most vibration comes from the front but we are working on and looking at other areas," says Pradeau. "We have 70 people in Time and 13 of those are R&D. We have a lot of resources to do this."

**Opposite page:**

Time's Aktiv fork uses auto technology — and cast iron!

**Bottom left:** Trek's IsoSpeed decoupler

**Below:** Bradley Wiggins riding the Dogma K8-S at Paris-Roubaix



Time is not alone.

Specialized has poured considerable resources into ride comfort. The use of CGR seatposts and Zertz viscoelastic dampers in forks and stays have been developed to smooth out the ride on models like its Roubaix endurance machine. Trek meanwhile developed the Isospeed decoupler to allow a certain level of compliance where the top tube and seat tube meet.

Taking things another step, Pinarello launched its Dogma K8-S at Paris-Roubaix this year, which offers 10mm travel in its elastomeric shock at the top of the wishbone seatstay. And when Canyon unveiled a concept bike at last year's Eurobike show, it came equipped with carbon springs and magneto-rheological dampers on the forks and rear end. These offer electronically controlled travel up to a maximum of 15mm, depending on how many volts are passed through the system. Although showcased only on a concept machine, suspension for road bikes would, promised Canyon's sales boss Ward Grootjans, be a big up-and-coming theme in the future.

### **Crash but don't burn: protective fabrics**

Given the state of injury or relative undress a racer might find him or herself in after crashing, improving the protective properties and durability of clothing has presented a big challenge for cycling garment manufacturers. While recent trends have been more concerned with aerodynamics (tighter fits, thinner materials), weight (climbing jerseys) and aesthetics (classic looks for moody catalogue images), Scott brought crash protection to the table last year when it launched its Pro Tec range of shorts and jerseys. These use carbon yarn treated with a ceramic print to give the garments far tougher, harder-wearing panels.

"It's a very soft printing technology which is very abrasion-resistant," explains Markus Lutz of Swiss textile specialist Schoeller who produces the fabric that Scott use. "It protects, on one hand, the athlete themselves but also the fabric won't be destroyed [so easily]."

The technology is not actually brand new; the cycling industry has just been slow to pick up on it.

"It was developed 10 years ago," says Lutz. "We started in the outdoor field for mountaineering jackets to protect the shoulder, elbow and knees or to protect against abrasion and friction when wearing a backpack.

"It was also used for alpine racing suits to protect the fabric when the skier hits the slalom poles. Now we've found out that the protection is very good when you hit asphalt. The fabric doesn't rip and should help prevent wounds."

Lutz explains the first cycling company to use this kind of technology was Gore Bike Wear, four years ago, but that the firm only used it as a small insert in some padded leg wear.

"Now Scott has done a lot more with it and with lots of marketing."

Fabian Heigemeir, apparel product developer at Scott, explains that the company had been running the protective racewear project on the backburner when it was given an unexpected thrust forward.

"It all came about accidentally," Heigemeir admits. "Quite literally. I had a crash at 40kph. My whole left side was ripped to shreds.

"We already had this project going for several years, but the compromises you had to make for flexibility and comfort were always too high. Having my accident was a spark to start the project again and refocus.

"Schoeller already had a fabric and we worked together so it would be good on the bike. Now, when it comes to weight and flexibility, the comparison is pretty similar [to a garment without this treatment]. Weight differences might be just 20 or 40g."

Within a year of Scott's product being launched, protective race gear also made its debut in the Tour de France, when Giant-Alpecin riders turned up at this year race wearing shorts laced with Dyneema. An ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene that Dutch manufacturers DSM call the "strongest fibre in the world", it's a different technology to ceramic printing but



**"The protection is very good when you hit the asphalt. It should help prevent wounds"**

**Above:** Schoeller's abrasion-resistant, wonder fabric has its roots in skiing

**Right:** Giant-Alpecin's Warren Barguil has been trialling protective kit with excellent results

ultimately used to the same end in the side panels of the team's Etxeondo-made shorts.

Warren Barguil is of course obliged to speak highly of his sponsor's product, but after crashing on stage 10 of the Tour de France to La Pierre Saint Martin, he testified: "The new shorts performed amazingly well. After the crash I had grazes in many places on my body. However, the skin on my thighs, despite being bruised, remained undamaged."

Lutz too has as agenda but believes we're going to see a lot more of this protective type clothing in the bunch. A lot of garment manufacturers use Schoeller's products, and the treatment is available for a variety of uses.





"Generally you can do a ceramic print on all of our fabrics and in different colours and patterns," he says. "It has to be finished the right way but it opens possibilities for gloves or shoes too."

"It's light, it's flexible, it's just a matter of time and cost," he adds. And there's its only real catch. He acknowledges: "It does cost a lot."

#### **Belt up: the changing face of transmission**

One trend gaining real traction in the bike industry is belt-drive technologies. This is quite simply doing away with the age-old metal chain and replacing it with something a little more modern. Belt-drive bikes still look a bit funny to most observers, probably because the simple, functional chain has been a



largely trouble-free constant on the bicycle as other technologies have evolved. However, American power transmission belt specialist Gates doesn't believe that makes the traditional chain worth sticking with.

"The chain is a very simple thing, but it's not God-given," says Karlheinz Nicolai who heads up Gates Carbon Drive's European division. "It could be considered the weakest point on the bike. It gets on your nerves. Just touch a chain and you are very dirty."

In 2006 Gates came up with a manifesto to make "something very simple a little bit better." The cleanliness of a toothed belt — it simply washes clean with water — and lack of maintenance required — it doesn't need grease and won't corrode

**Above:** 'Maintenance-free' belt drive bikes could prove the perfect winter trainer  
**Left:** Carbon 'beltring' saves weight — and oily trouser legs

**"You have the stiffness of a steel chain but without any oil, and it's much lighter. A chain stretches — this gives you a more direct feeling"**

— are perhaps seen as the biggest plus by the bicycle industry, and that's why there's a burgeoning demand for the technology on utility cycles and e-bikes. Belt advocates also argue that a belt drive is also lighter, stronger, twice as durable and more reliable than the common chain.

"A key point is that the belt [made of carbon-fibre-reinforced polyurethane] doesn't stretch," says Nicolai. "With this you have the stiffness of a steel chain but without any oil, and it's much lighter. A chain stretches — this gives you a more direct feeling."

BMC for one has hinted at seeing belt drive as the future on road bikes. When the firm brought a concept machine to last year's Eurobike showcasing their vision of tomorrow's road bike, it opted for an enclosed drive train. However, BMC admits this was the one area of the machine it had thought least about. So could such transmission systems really trickle up to racing machines?

From a performance point of view, the system certainly has a number of things going for it.

"The carbon-fibre inside is really strong, and most people think that the belt drive is less efficient than a chain," says Sabastian Taege, a technician at Berlin-based Schindelhauer whose boutique bikes are only ever powered via belt. "But there's a study by the University of Cologne, and they analysed the efficiency between a chain and a belt drive. It came out that, under high loads, the belt drive was even superior to the chain."

Consequently Schindelhauer has taken to sponsoring a team that raced fixed gear criteriums such as Red Hook in New York and Rad Race in Germany. Magazine *BMX Plus!* came back with positive results when it recently assessed

belt drive on racing BMXs — prompting enquiries from several national squads. Gates meanwhile has sponsored a successful single-speed cyclo-cross team in the States and has several 'privateers' who ride with belt drive on the track.

"Performance is better than a chain," claims Nicolai. "Security and efficiency is better. You have a more direct pedalling feeling. You can prove it on the velodrome; it would knock seconds off rides."

However, here's the first catch: belt drive is not currently allowed under UCI technical regulations, which stipulate the transmission system of a bike should comprise a chain.

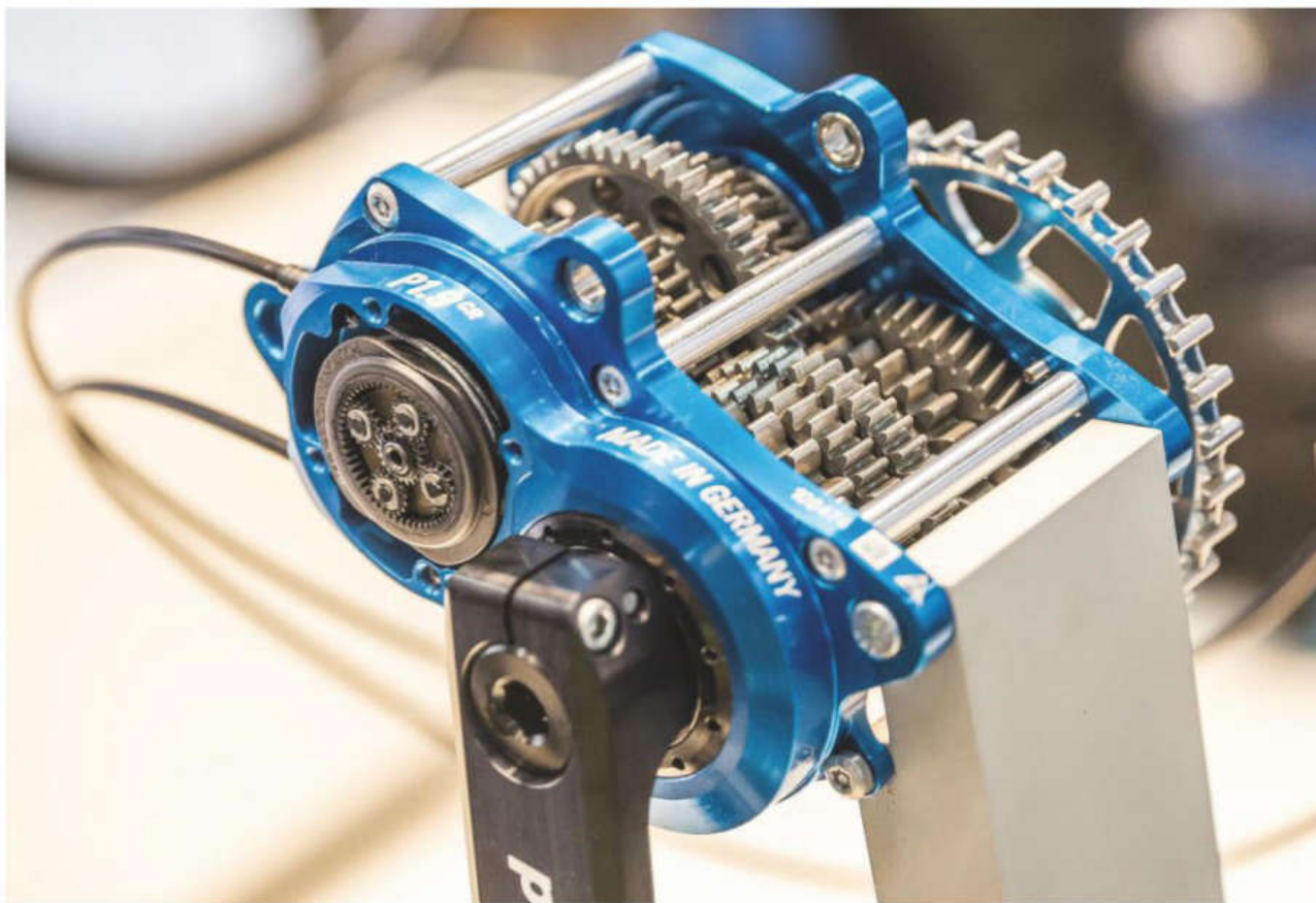
### **All-singing, all-dancing**

The other reasons why the apparently all-singing, all-dancing belt drive is not currently used in road racing are more technical than mere UCI regulations (which the bicycle industry may be able to talk its way around). One is gearing. The common derailleur is almost as integral to road bikes as the chain. In its current form, belt drive — which requires its own version of chainring and sprocket — simply won't operate with derailleurs.

"The basic supposition of the belt drive is that you run it on single-speed, internal gear hub shifting systems or a very modern form of gearbox in the bottom bracket," says Nicolai.

Although Rohloff and Shimano Alfine hubs are popular in fields such as touring, they've yet to have made much of an impact in road racing.

"The efficiency of a Rohloff gear hub or a Pinion gearbox is very high," says Taege. "It is the weight or the weight distribution which presents a problem. If you ride the bike with a Rohloff rear **123**



hub, it means you have 1.5kg in the rear and it makes it a bit unsuitable for a proper race bike.”

The other big hang-up is the frame. Because a carbon drive belt is manufactured as a single, continuous, unbreakable piece (unlike a chain, which you can split), it can't be looped through the rear triangle of a conventionally framed bike as a chain is. Typically, bikes built for belt drive have a join near the dropout that can be opened for a belt's fitting or removal.

There's also the question as to whether quick-release is adequately secure for holding a wheel in place. If you're running belt drive (i.e. without a derailleur) then there's a need for some adjustability at the dropout to maintain drive-train tension.

None of the issues are unsolvable, though. Disc brakes have already forced some rethinking on quick-release set-ups. At this year's Eurobike, Gates had an internal hub-geared, belt drive Stevens road bike on show that was the property of a German racer. The wheels

**“I can really imagine that in 15 years' time, derailleur systems will be a thing of the past”**

were securely fitted and the rear triangle had an open-able gate.

“She has it for her winter training because she's riding four hours per day in rain or snow and she hates all the maintenance these conditions require,” said Nicolai.

#### **Forward thinking**

As bikes develop, the need for these clunky workarounds may also disappear. And as the UCI's technical regulations slowly liberalise, maybe — just maybe — race bikes will stop needing both seatstays and chainstays. Certainly, some of the cutting-edge monocoques of the Nineties did away with the double-sided conventional rear triangle.

“In 15, 20 years when there's a gearbox in the bottom bracket that

**Above:** Could bottom bracket gearboxes like this become the norm?

performs better than a derailleur system, we could see road bikes with belt drive,” says Nicolai. “But it's not certain to happen. It needs a change in thinking.”

“If you think 15 years ahead, I can really imagine that derailleur systems will not be the ordinary system,” adds Dirk Stölting, product designer at Pinion, which makes internal gearboxes. “Our product has been three years on the market now, we are growing fast and have a lot of ideas inside the R&D department.”

“Speaking as an industrial designer, I can imagine placing a gearbox system in almost any bike because it makes sense in any bike. At the moment, though, we are focusing on progress in touring and e-bikes.”

Does that sound familiar? There's little demand for this technology on road bikes; current machines are not equipped for it, and the industry is largely focusing its efforts on other sectors of the market. But if you rewind 15 years, disc brakes were in a very similar place.

END

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A close-up, low-angle shot of Peter Sagan riding a road bike. He is wearing a white jersey with blue and red accents, featuring the 'Krys Krys' logo. His shorts are red and white with 'Tinkoff SAXO' printed on the side. The background is a blurred road and green foliage. A large, semi-transparent red number '13' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Reasons why we love Peter Sagan

From his ability to ride on almost all terrain, to his impressive bike-handling skills and never-say-die attitude, we've rounded up some of the reasons why the Slovak is one of the peloton's best

Photos Graham Watson, Yuzuru Sunada, Cor Vos, Jean Catuffe/Cetty Images

## His descent of the Col de Manse

When riders crest the mountain summits of the Tour de France it's usually the cue for an ad break. We've become conditioned to get excited about the ascents not the descents. But the Col de Manse is different. And so is Peter Sagan. So when he took off in pursuit of Ruben Plaza over the top of the Col de Manse on stage 16 of this year's Tour we were anticipating a descending masterclass — as long as the motorcycle rider assigned to him could keep up and the TV cameraman could hold him in his viewfinder.

The Col de Manse has quite a reputation. The 8.9km climb on the outskirts of Gap holds little fear for the Tour peloton, but the descent is another thing altogether. This is the descent on which Joseba Beloki's career was all but finished (it was the crash that famously forced Lance Armstrong off-road before he jumped a ditch and rejoined the group), and where Alberto Contador came down in 2013 as he tried to ramp up the pressure on Chris Froome. GC riders approach this stretch of road with caution. Froome admitted this year that the whole stage would be a stressful one thanks to the descent that came right at the very end.

Sagan, however, saw it as an opportunity. Having spent the day in the break and amassing more points toward his inevitable green jersey victory, he sat in the wheels on the ascent, spinning a little gear, before seizing his moment.

Over the top Plaza was one minute clear and looked nailed on for victory, but anything can happen on this descent.



When Sagan went, IAM's Jarlinson Pantano went with him. Did he know what he'd just let himself in for? Along the fast straights nearer the top of the climb Pantano could hold on to Sagan, just. As the Colombian sprinted out of every corner and pedalled furiously along the straights, it became clear just how fast the Slovak was going; sat almost sideways on his top tube with his chin virtually resting on the front of his stem to get as low as possible.

As the corners tightened the gap between the two opened up, and as Sagan took more and more risks, Pantano seemingly made the decision to take it at his own speed.

The descent off the Manse stands out for

several reasons. The surface changes from smooth to rough with little warning and the corners are equally inconsistent. Beloki corner, as it is now known, is a prime example of this. It's a tight right-hander with little camber and the riders hit it blind immediately after coming round a fast, open left-hand bend. Sagan piled through here at full speed and approached the corner out of shape. Still he was able to keep calm, lean the bike over to an impossible angle and hold his momentum.

His incredible descent was one of the Tour's highlights, and while it wasn't enough to net him the stage win, we believe it will be Sagan, not Plaza, who will be remembered for this stage.



## He can punch

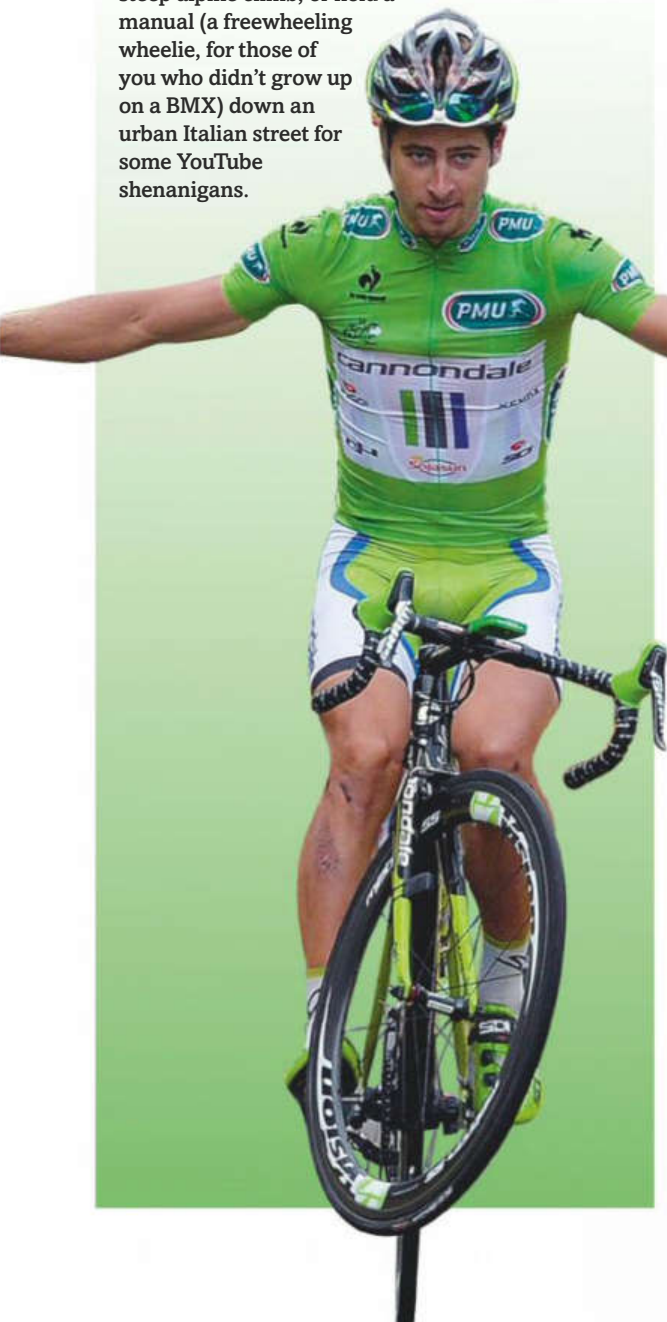
Cyclists might be tough, cyclists may be capable of enduring huge amounts of pain, but let's face it, they can't punch. (For proof, see the hilarious YouTube video of Ramon Arrieta and Leonardo Sierra in the 1995 Vuelta a España.)

Sagan however, can. Being Sagan, it's not other riders he's punching. No, true to his rarely used nickname the Hulk (well, he once had it sprayed on to his Cannondale frame — but it never really stuck) he's prepared to take on something much tougher when he's mad. Sagan punches cars. Or at least he does in the moments after he's been sent skidding down the road by an errant motorbike. We're just glad we weren't sat in that car.

## He does the best wheelies in the peloton

Pulling a wheelie on a road bike used to be a rare skill. For years Aussie sprinter Robbie McEwen had a monopoly on popping a wheelie over a mountaintop finish line to rapturous applause from the fans who'd stuck around to see the autobus finish. But now it seems that everyone can pull one. Even Chris Froome was pictured wheelieing through Paris this year after his Tour win. We couldn't really imagine Big Mig doing that in the early Nineties.

Still, Sagan's wheelies are the best. Not only can he wheelie, he can hold a no-handed wheelie up a steep alpine climb, or hold a manual (a freewheeling wheelie, for those of you who didn't grow up on a BMX) down an urban Italian street for some YouTube shenanigans.



## He wears mismatched kit and manages to pull it off

There's no getting away from it, a bright green jersey does not go with white, red and fluoro green shorts along with grey socks and plain black shoes. At first sight it was a ghastly combination, but by this

year's Tour, Sagan's very 'Euro' look had grown on us. And at least he was easy to spot. Throw in a black bike with some digital camo graphics and it's harder still to pull the look off. Yet somehow, Sagan did it. And hey, at least he didn't grow a goatee beard and dye it green.



## He messes about in the press zone

The post-stage press zone can be a serious place. Line a load of journalists along some barriers and make tired cyclists walk along and answer the same question for 20 minutes and you don't get a barrel of laughs. Which is maybe why Sagan likes to lighten the mood. His photo-bombing of Vincenzo Nibali's TV interviews this year made *Cycle Sport* chuckle, if only because it raised a smile in what we know to be the most tedious environment imaginable.

He's not averse to messing about mid-race, either. Following an intermediate sprint on stage four of this year's Tour he turned round and jokingly circled his index finger to suggest he, Mark Cavendish, André Greipel and John Degenkolb should go through-and-off to form a break, much to their amusement.

## He celebrates well

While he hasn't had the chance to extend his winning repertoire recently, Sagan has entertained with his celebrations in the past. His running man at the 2012 Tour, a wheelie in the 2013 Ghent Wevelgem... maybe all these recent second places are because he hasn't come up with any new ones.

Predictably for such a traditional sport, some suggested — mainly via Twitter — his celebrations were disrespectful. When questioned about them in a press conference at the 2012 Tour, Sagan suggested his detractors would tune in to see what he did next. Nice comeback.



## He's a clean sprinter

There are few sprinters that haven't come in for some form of criticism at least once. Taking one too many risks, a bad decision made in a split second, closing a rival out on the barriers or bouncing off their nearest competitors; a catastrophic mistake is never far away in a bunch sprint. But when was the last time you heard of another rider grumbling about Sagan's riding? You probably haven't. The simple reason being, Sagan is a clean rider. He has spent four years competing in the nail-biting environment that is a Tour bunch sprint — often without much of a sprint train to protect and guide him — but still we haven't heard anyone complaining about his riding. It's a rare achievement to prosper in such a high-pressure, perilous place and not once put another rider in danger. It's the sort of thing that gains a rider massive amounts of respect from their peers.



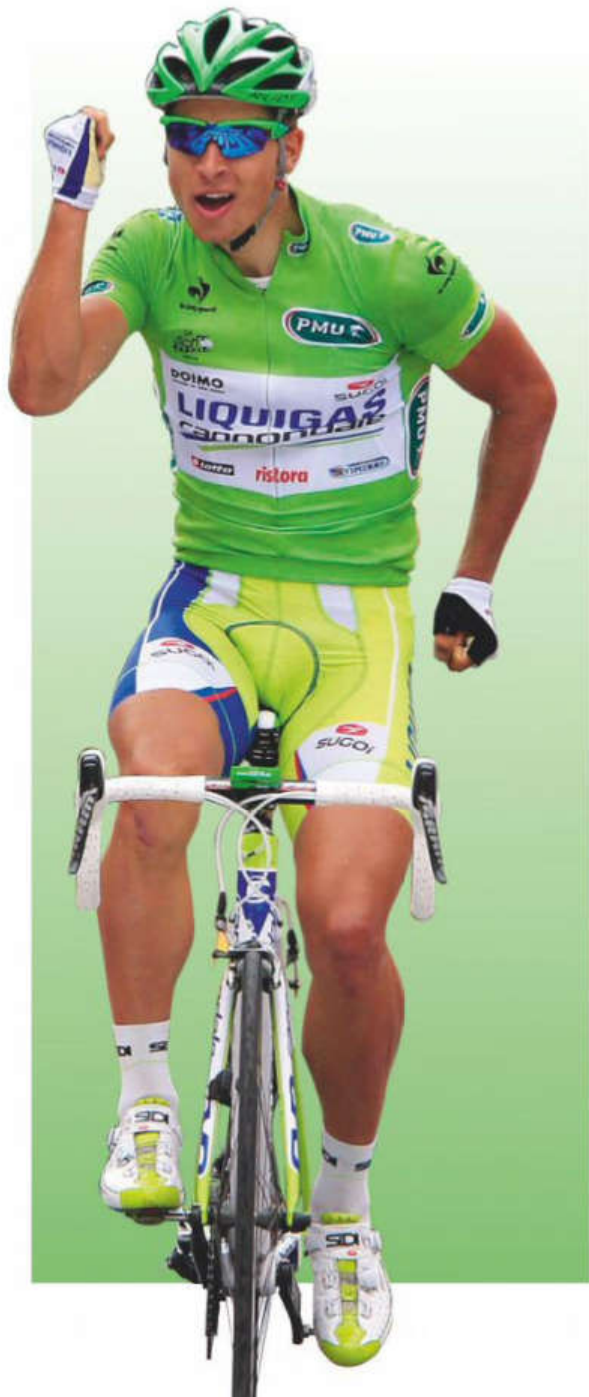
## He's a Slovak trailblazer

Slovakia doesn't have a rich history in professional cycling. The country that sits slap bang in the middle of Europe (geographically speaking) is ranked 17th in the WorldTour with 229 points. Every single one of those points has been earned by Sagan. Sadly for Slovak cycling fans, there doesn't seem to be much strength in depth following Sagan through the ranks.

Peter Velits was the first Slovak to start the Tour in 2008. His brother Martin and Sagan became the second and third in 2012, and Sagan is the only Slovak to have

won a stage. It's no doubt this leap from obscurity that has propelled him to godlike status in his home country, and why the Peter Sagan Fan Club now has its own bright purple bus to travel around in.

Sagan's achievements are greater still for the fact that he comes from a country with little success at the top of the sport, and no clear structure — race programme, well-funded governing body or abundance of teams — with which to develop talent. Whoever leads the way, as Sagan has, will be remembered forever.



## He's an all-round bike rider

All cycling fans long for bike racers who compete year-round against all opposition. Well, Sagan isn't far off that. It's common to see him mixing it in early-season 'warm-up' bunch sprints in the Middle East when the likes of Fabian Cancellara and Tom Boonen are keeping out of trouble with one eye on the Classics. When Sagan then comes up against these one-day behemoths he can match them on their terrain. He may not have got the better of Cancellara in a Classics mano-a-mano just yet, but both the Swiss star and Boonen have proved far more fragile than Sagan over the last couple of seasons, losing whole campaigns to an untimely crash. Sagan, meanwhile, has been omnipresent, barely missing a pedal stroke.

As he's younger, he is still in that period of his career when he quickly bounces back after a crash, but it's rare to see him caught up in a crash in the first place. A prime example of why it's safer to ride at the front of the peloton — as any good DS will tell you.

His consistency in the early-season Classics is building nicely with three top-five finishes in both Milan-San Remo and the Tour of Flanders in the past four editions. Having missed the 2012 and 2013 editions of Paris-Roubaix due to his tender age (it's easy to forget he's still only 25) his last two appearances have seen him finish sixth and 23rd. He was second in the 2008 junior edition (to Sky's Andy Fenn), a result that suggests he'll win the Queen of the Classics soon enough.

Give him a spring break and Sagan is then back on it at the Tour de France. Whether it's a flat, bunch sprint, a little climb to the line, or a big day in the mountains, you know Sagan is going to get involved somehow. Four consecutive green jersey victories have come despite ASO changing the points structure for 2015 to favour the pure sprinters and dilute Sagan's dominance. But whatever they do, they can't stop him. Even his own team forcing him to ride in support of Alberto Contador's GC ambitions couldn't stop him this year (note that he never complained about this). ASO, and all the bunch sprinters, need to accept that for the foreseeable future, whenever Sagan makes it to Paris, he's going to be wearing green. A world title can't be far away.

**“Sagan has been omnipresent, barely losing a pedal stroke”**

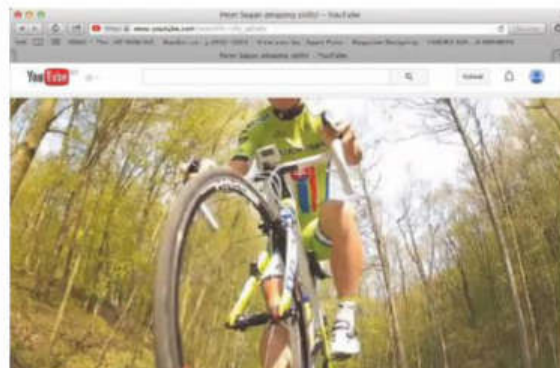
## Flowing locks

Curly hair sticking out the bottom of a helmet is usually a very bad look, especially on hot, sweaty days. But, like the mismatching kit, Sagan manages to pull it off. As he does the goatee. The rest of the peloton must be like, sooooooooo jealous.



## 1 He thinks constantly finishing second is funny

Elite sportspeople can be mentally fragile. That's often the very thing that drives them. One high-profile loss can leave them in a pit of despair for weeks; two can haunt someone for a whole season. Sagan went 780 days without a win in a Grand Tour, taking 10 second places, five third places and 25 top-five places along the way. His reaction when he finally took a win at the Vuelta this August? "It's funny. All those second places are almost impossible. You have to be one time first or third. No?" We're fairly sure that his massive monthly pay cheque smoothes the way somewhat.



## 2 He's the best bike handler in the peloton

We've covered Sagan's outstanding descending prowess, and the fact he's a wheelie god, but that's just the start of his bike-handling talent. Do a search on YouTube for 'Sagan riding skills' and you'll be entertained for hours by the tricks he can pull. One video, uploaded in June 2013, shows him riding toward a parked car, up onto the bonnet, up the windscreen and onto the roof where he pops his Cannondale Synapse into the bike rack. Now, Eddy Merckx might have been a good bike rider, but when was the last time he rode a bike onto the roof of a Citroën C5 Tourer?

Then there's Sagan's time trial at this year's Tirreno-Adriatico, where he pulled off a minor miracle to hold his bike upright round a 45-degree left-hand turn. Sagan is fully committed in the approach of the corner when a lady on a shopping bike pops into view. She's riding on the pavement, but directly towards Sagan and obviously throws his concentration. No sooner does she come into view than his back wheel skids out — no doubt after he touches the brake fearing a head-on collision. No sooner does his back wheel skid out than his left foot is out of the pedal and dabbing on the ground to keep him upright. Not many people could have held that. Just for fun, a little further down the route a black cat sprints across his path. After all that he still finished ninth.

Bike-handling skills obviously run in the family — his brother Milan races both enduro and motocross.



## 3 He never gives up

For all Sagan's second places, he absolutely never gave up. He chased stage wins long after everyone else would have given up, sometimes over terrain on which you'd never back him. In the Tour it's only a mountaintop finish that would deter him from challenging. That attitude can only come from a pure love of bike racing as well as the obvious competitive spirit that lives in every bike rider. And for that, more than anything else, we salute him. Long may it continue.

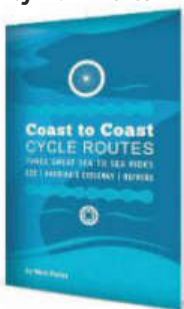


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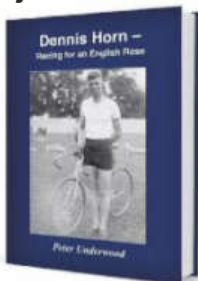


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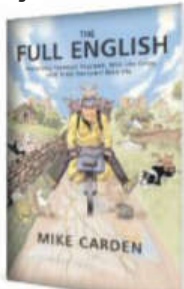


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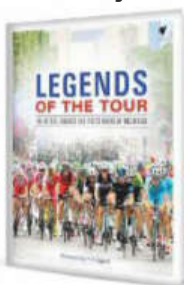


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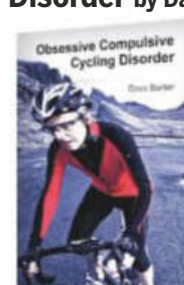


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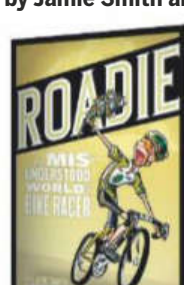


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# GREIPEL

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## the GREAT?

**André Greipel** has been cycling's in-form sprinter this year, taking his biggest-ever haul of wins at the Tour de France in July. But is the man known as 'the Gorilla' and a gentleman of the peloton, also one of the sport's all-time best?

Words Richard Abraham Photos Graham Watson, Cor Vos, Bryn Lennon/Getty Images, Daniel Gould





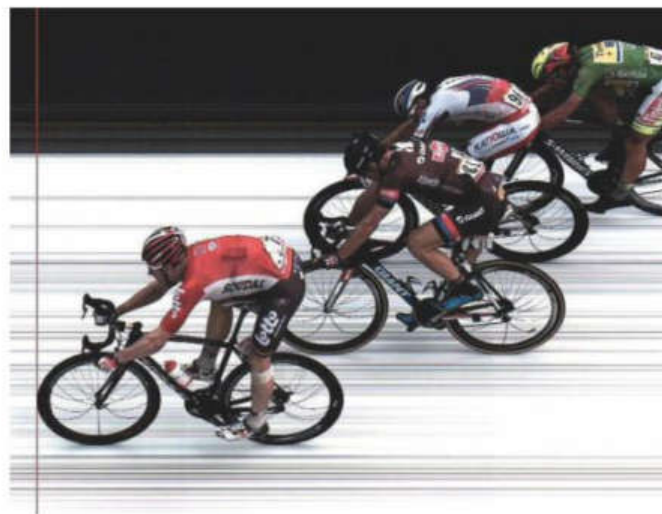
**T**hey call André Greipel 'the Gorilla'. It's not hard to see why. Physically imposing, with muscles that look like lumps of clay slapped onto his bones, he prowls around the peloton with a confidence and assurance that few other riders can match.

He's not that much bigger than your average athlete but among a pack of skinny cyclists his wide, symmetrical shoulders and enormous hands make him a two-wheeled King Kong. Although with his fair hair and pale skin, perhaps Snowflake would be more suitable.

In case his physical presence wasn't obvious enough, during the middle of an interview with *Cycle Sport* at August's

Eneco Tour, the Lotto-Soudal rider finishes drinking from a plastic water bottle before slowly crushing it into a small cube. Small, airless, crushed; it's probably how a lot of Greipel's rivals feel when they're on the receiving end of all that power. And it's happened a lot this season: 14 times to be precise. Four of these were on the cycling world's biggest stage, the Tour de France, which represented Greipel's biggest ever haul at the race. With Marcel Kittel's year-long illness and lack of form and Mark Cavendish's struggles, Greipel has been the standout sprinter of the season.

To be a sprinting great you need a collection of traits. An enormous burst of power delivered at exactly the right





**“He really wants to win — there’s no question about that. Every time he pins a number on, he wants to win”**

time is top of the list. But the best sprinters of the sport have also been cunning and deft, with a bit of bad attitude. Mario Cipollini was a narcissist with a penchant for dazzling outfits, who liked to break the rules like a kid turning up at school with his shirt untucked. Peter Sagan with his wheelies and celebrations (and touchy-feely antics) is another natural showman. Robbie McEwen had no problem getting his hands dirty with the odd headbutt in a finish line dash, while Tom Steels famously chucked a water bottle at his opponent in the middle of a Tour de France sprint in 1997. Djamolidine Abdoujaparov was a head-down, eyes-closed, gung-ho nutter whose

**Main:** Lotto-Soudal’s team manager Marc Sergeant (l) checks on his star rider at the Tour de France

**Above right:** Always the gentleman, Greipel obliges the press after another big win

**Left:** A photo finish captures Greipel’s stage 15 Tour win over fellow German John Degenkolb

somewhat reckless approach to sprinting earned the Uzbek the nickname ‘the Tashkent Terror’.

A victory complex on the bike often spills over the finish line and into real life but André Greipel is... well, he’s a nice guy. He doesn’t throw his weight around, or his dummy out of the pram, and there’s no braggadocio, no evident ego, no histrionics, and not a bit of misplaced aggression. When he crushed the plastic water bottle, it was probably just to make more space in the recycling bin.

Greipel’s victory count speaks for itself; he is one of the most consistent and prolific sprinters in the sport today, quite possibly of all time. But is André Greipel more than that? Is he a sprinting great?

### Consistent winner

Of course, many would argue that what ultimately marks out a great sprinter is success. Getting your arms in the air is what gets a sprinter out of bed in the morning, what keeps sponsors happy, and makes team bosses bend over backwards to sign them up. Greipel obviously likes winning. He has won a Tour de France stage every year since 2011, in every edition that he’s started. No other current rider can say that. His win tally from 2011 to 2015 reads one, three, one, one and four respectively — 2015 was his best year yet.

“He really wants to win, there’s no question about that,” his team-mate and lead-out man Greg Henderson tells



*Cycle Sport*. "Every time he pins a number on, he wants to win."

Greipel also has a record of pinning a number on, and winning, from January right through to October. Every year he has participated at the Tour Down Under, but in 2015 and 2011, he's won stages, and can generally be relied upon to bag a win in the late season at the Tour of Britain and northern European one-day races.

"He's the consummate professional, and he's consistent," Henderson adds. "If you look at his results, he's always in top condition, he'll always win a bike race at just about every race he goes to."

There's no doubt that this season the Gorilla has benefited from the stability of his troop, a group of riders he has ridden with for over three years at Lotto and before that at Highroad and T-Mobile. Henderson is a key part of that, as are Adam Hansen and Marcel Sieberg, for whom Greipel was a best man at his wedding. Before you ask, he didn't have to give a best man's speech.

"The whole team has the benefit of knowing each other, outside the race but also the way we act in the race," Greipel says. "I can follow them closely, I trust them 100 per cent. And I think it helps

**Above:** Team-mates cite the unstinting professionalism as a key quality that fuels the 33-year-old's race successes, including at the Eneco Tour  
**Right:** Greipel claims his final stage win on the podium in Paris at the Tour de France

that you're friends in private life, that you can give the best for each other."

Greipel probably benefits from his team more than other sprinters. McEwen and his contemporary Oscar Freire were able to thrive on the uncertainty and breathless chaos of a sprint finish, latching on to wheels, elbowing their way through gaps, and suspending common sense for a sniff of a win. Sieberg, however, describes his compatriot and friend as someone who "isn't a kamikaze sprinter". He's somebody who likes a clean sprint, who needs that train to wind him up and pull him into position.



"You have to build it up and deliver him in the last 200 metres," says Lotto-Soudal manager Marc Sergeant. "Last year he struggled a little bit, he was often too far back in the bunch, and so we decided to put him in a more advanced position, the first 20 or 30 in the bunch. If he's 50th in the bunch he doesn't feel so comfortable. For some sprinters it's easier, but that gives him the confidence he needs."

#### Strong work ethic

Build-up, positioning, stability; it's the same story off the bike. The Gorilla it

seems is a creature of habit. Greipel changed teams in 2011, moving to Omega Pharma-Lotto. In 2012 he won three stages in the Tour. In 2013 he started working with his current coach, Paul Van den Bosch; in 2014 he won 16 races and in 2015 he stepped up with WorldTour wins in Paris-Nice, the Giro d'Italia, Tour de France, Eneco Tour and Vattenfall Cyclassics. At the same time, like a sprint train winding up, Greipel's physical statistics are getting better and better.

"Everybody says that the older you get, the slower you get," he says. "But **DD**

#### Worlds ambition

## The next big win

One of the biggest criticisms levelled at André Greipel is that he's very good at winning small races, but never quite hits the target on the biggest stage. Now though, with his Tour wins into double figures, it doesn't really hold up to scrutiny. Greipel looks back on the 2011 World Championships road race in Copenhagen, where he finished third behind Mark Cavendish and Matt Goss, as an example of his former self.

"I had never been in the situation to get a medal at the Worlds and now after four years I can say that I lost maybe because of the lack of self confidence," he says. "Maybe I didn't believe in it 100 per cent, that I could make it."

It seems Greipel has

grown up, and on the biggest stage has shown his potential to be more than a bunch sprinter.

Not only is he willing to muck in for his team-mates, he's also a handy wild card for Lotto-Soudal in the one-day cobbled Classics, grabbing 15th and 28th in the Tour of Flanders and Paris-Roubaix earlier this year.

His win on stage two of the Tour, in the crosswinds of the Netherlands, confirmed that he's capable of rubbing elbows and getting his hands dirty. At the time of going to press, he had one eye on the World Championships road race in Richmond and 12 months later in Qatar. Perhaps that big win is just around the corner.





### German attitudes

## A tough crowd to please

One place where André Greipel hasn't got the recognition he deserves is his homeland of Germany. The country is spoilt for choice when it comes to talent, with Marcel Kittel, John Degenkolb and Tony Martin to name a few. Meanwhile TV coverage of the Tour de France has only just returned in 2015 after the toxic legacy of Jan Ullrich, Erik Zabel and the EPO-soaked days of Telekom led broadcasters to drop cycling for a three-year hiatus.

Greipel doesn't crave the limelight; those around him testify that he prefers not to be

the focus of attention. But he also points to a peculiar German condition regarding success.

"It's the German mentality. When you are good, you are good. But when you are bad, it's over," Greipel says. "Winning counts and everything else... doesn't!"

National attitudes to sport are fascinating. The British public celebrates its stars' success but also indulges in self-deprecating humour during their failure. It's also as much about the character as it is the winning; the apparently straightforward, polite Chris Froome is yet to

achieve the popularity of the more volatile Sir Bradley Wiggins and Mark Cavendish. The French apparently value a 'beautiful' loss above a soulless win. Germans, Greipel says, are quick to forget.

"I'm a bit sad about it," Greipel adds. "The Tour is three weeks and then it's gone. They [the public] forget fast. Everybody on German TV said I'm one of the world's best sprinters. But in 2012 I also won three stages in the Tour, and I won a lot of other races. This is German journalism, they just live in the moment."



I can't see a year where I haven't seen a progression."

Why, *Cycle Sport* asks Henderson, is Greipel so successful?

"Two thousand watts!" he laughs. "He's a professional, he does everything right. He ticks all the boxes. No stone left unturned; he's never turned up unfit."

You could argue that Greipel has had that professional ethic drilled into him from day one in the professional ranks. In his first pro season, 2006, Greipel found himself on the same team as another fast finishing neo-pro called Mark Cavendish. The following season, when Cavendish got his first win at the 2007 Scheldeprijs, the team welcomed another German sprinter in the form of Gerald Ciolek. Greipel has had to work

hard to pull clear from the shadow of his rivals, a hallmark of a great sprinter (even if Greipel's rivals have been internal). He might not possess the devastating kick of Cavendish in his prime nor the ability to tower head and shoulders above his opposition in a sprint like Marcel Kittel, but Greipel has applied his work ethic to developing a monstrous peak power. Certainly where Kittel, Ciolek and Cavendish are concerned, he has (for the time being) had the last laugh.

Perhaps there's also an obsessive streak in Greipel, and one that most amateur cyclists will be able to empathise with. The man just loves riding his bike.

"I really love it," Greipel says with a broad smile. "I always say that every day without a bike is a lost day for me. Even if it's raining, when it's a challenge to get your ass out and ride your bike.

"The workers outside who have to prepare the roads, they have to go outside if it rains or if it's sunny. It's the same with me. Once you come back in the rain, after four hours, then you take a hot shower and you say, 'Oh, it wasn't so bad.'"

### Real gentleman

To get to the heart of Greipel, take a look at stage seven of this year's Tour, where he finished second in a sprint finish in Fougères to Cavendish. Had Greipel won that day, he would have been well on his way to five stage wins and the race would have had a very different tone for his Manx rival.

He could easily have won. As the pair approached the finish line around a gentle right bend, Greipel could have moved his line to the right of the road, taken the inside line, and blocked Cavendish in. Instead he chose to leave the door open for Cavendish, let him have a clean sprint, and he got beaten.

"Technically he could have kept me boxed in — he could have moved over to the barriers but he stayed left to give me the gap and it shows the gentleman that he is," Cavendish said after the stage. "If Sagan had been in Greipel's position he would have closed me on

## "It's difficult to combine sprinter and gentleman. If you give gifts, you lose"

**Left:** Too much of a gent? The moment Greipel left room for Mark Cavendish in the stage seven sprint finish of the Tour

the barriers but Greipel wanted a fair sprint so he stayed left and let me come through and sprint one on one."

"He is a gentleman," says Sergeant. "I said in the Tour, if he wasn't a gentleman he would have beaten Cavendish.

"He always thinks about the rest while a lot of other sprinters only think about themselves. He cares about the other sprinters. He's a different person to Cavendish, or another flamboyant sprinter. He's more calm. Once the sprint is over, give him two minutes and he's normal again.

"Sometimes it's very difficult to combine sprinter and gentleman," Sergeant adds. "You have to be fighting for position and if you give gifts, you lose, for sure. So that's why we often need a good train for him, and to deliver him in the right spot."

Greipel's current crop of rivals have won the green jersey, enjoyed stints in the yellow jersey, and won big Classics and the World Championships. Yet all these prestigious accolades are missing from Greipel's palmarès, and it's arguably those blue riband big wins that stand between the German and greatness. Being a gentleman doesn't always serve you well in the cut-throat environment of a sprint finish, something that his team-mates acknowledge.

At 33, relatively old for a sprinter, Greipel shows no signs of slowing down. But perhaps the Gorilla is too much of a human being to have won more? Were he a bit more of a killer, dare we say a little bit more unstable and reckless, would we be talking about the greatest sprinter of his generation?

He might not be the most thrilling, the most flamboyant, or command the same attachment from his fans. Yet that's his style; he is the workhorse, the professional, the gent. And in 2015, Greipel has proved that nice guys finish first.

END





# Canada calling

A far cry from the historic European races, yet with racing as lively as the most revered Classics, *Hugh Gladstone* headed west to find out more about North America's only WorldTour races

Photos Graham Watson, Cor Vos

**A**s far as North American cities go, Québec City is about as European as they come. It was where the French explorer Jacques Cartier landed on his second voyage to the New World in 1541 and yet another patch of the planet that the British and French have fought over. It has city walls, a citadel, the narrowest streets north of Mexico and, in the turreted Château Frontenac, its own kind of Grand Budapest Hotel.

Even so, it's still a long, long way from cycling's heartland.

A flight from London, Paris, Milan or Madrid will consume a day and likely require a connection from another North American hub. Coming in to land, the pilot may well speak in French — the traditional language of the peloton — but the plane banks over leafy suburbs that have a sprawl, sense of space and tidiness of layout that you just won't see on the European continent. On the cover of the race programme for this year's GP Cycliste de Québec and the GP Cycliste de Montréal, the races are billed as the 'crossing of the Atlantic'.

"It's good coming to places that you don't normally get to go to," reflects Adam Yates before the start of the Québec GP. Having already come second at the burgeoning Tour of Alberta further west, the Orica-GreenEdge rider



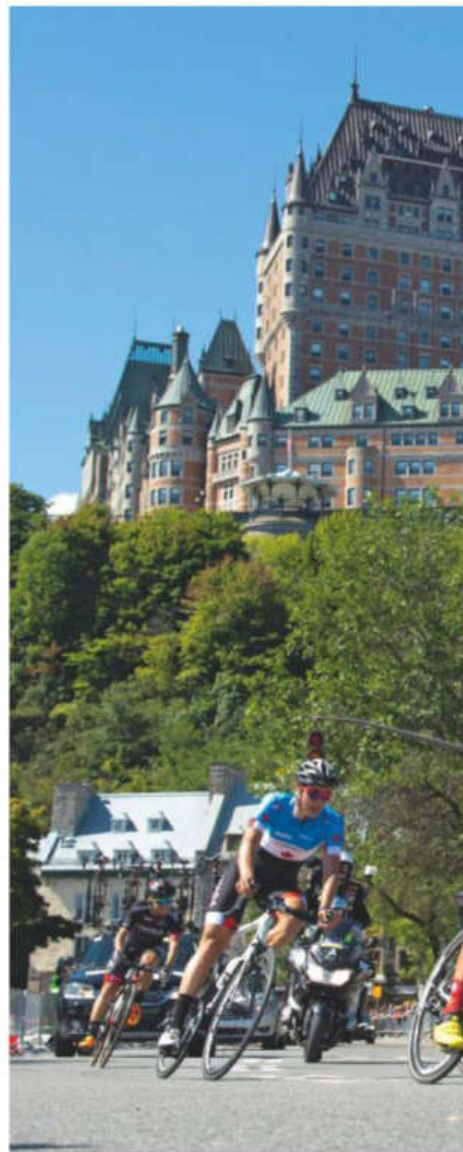
**"The roll of honour is full of Tour stage winners and world champions"**

is enjoying his first trip to Canada. And why wouldn't he? It's sunny and the vibe here before the start is relaxed with riders sitting in garden furniture under gazebos — although this set-up is in lieu of their beloved team buses, left behind in Europe.

The hospitality is first class with luxury hotels a welcome departure from the cramped, somewhat less salubrious accommodation the riders are sometimes put up (and have to put up

**Above** Stunning setting and perfect weather: Canada isn't always like this...

**Right** Riders race beneath the turrets of Château Frontenac



## Classic parcours

# Tale of two cities

The Grand Prix of Québec takes place right around its old town — down its avenues, through its arches, around its parkland, along the river and across the historic clifftop battlefield where General Wolfe led the English to a defeat of the French in 1759. Making use of the town's two tiers, a couple of sharp ramps rear up each lap. However, the race often comes down to a fast-paced cut and thrust finale that only really takes shape from a large-ish group in the last few kilometres. Taking place on a variation of an established circuit of Mont Royal, the Montréal

race offers more sustained climbing on the large forested hill that the city takes its name from.

Starting more or less from the home straight, it's a two-kilometre ascent that snakes through parkland and rocky cut-throughs before descending, via another kick up past the polytechnique, into residential streets. While this event is more likely to see a break survive, both races lend themselves to riders who can both climb reasonably and produce a powerful turn of speed. Repeat performers in these races are Robert Gesink, Simon Gerrans and Rui Costa.

with) in Europe. Comprising a couple of one-day races with a free day in between, the schedule is not too demanding.

But that's not to say the racing isn't. Take a look at the list of winners over these two races' six-year history: it's a roll of honour inhabited by world champions, Tour de France stage winners, popular favourites on the one-day circuit and solid future prospects.

"This is the WorldTour," says Ryder Hesjedal, who enjoys the races as a rare opportunity to compete on home soil. "These one-day races suit a lot of guys so there's no shortage of field quality. There's never a soft podium here."

Win one and it's valued on the UCI rankings with the same weighting as



## Past winners

### GP CYCLISTE DE QUEBEC

- 2010 Thomas Voeckler (Fra) Bbox Bouygues Telecom
- 2011 Philippe Gilbert (Bel) Omega Pharma-Lotto
- 2012 Simon Gerrans (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge
- 2013 Robert Gesink (Ned) Belkin Pro Cycling
- 2014 Simon Gerrans (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge
- 2015 Rigoberto Urán (Col) Etixx-Quick Step

### GP CYCLISTE DE MONTREAL

- 2010 Robert Gesink (Ned) Rabobank
- 2011 Rui Costa (Por) Movistar
- 2012 Lars Petter Nordhaug (Nor) Team Sky
- 2013 Peter Sagan (Svk) Cannondale
- 2014 Simon Gerrans (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge
- 2015 Tim Wellens (BEL) Lotto-Soudal

— if not perceived stature as — Ghent-Wevelgem and Flèche Wallonne.

While the attractions are obvious, there's still something a little bit out of place about them.

These two Canadian races are not the only WorldTour events to take place outside of Europe. But the Tour Down Under takes place at the beginning of the season like all those other far-flung stage races that are often seen as training races. Tours also have an innate logic to them. But these are two one-day races out on a limb in September. They take place on urban circuits with wide roads with unfamiliar markings. Why are they here? And why at this time in the season? How do they fit with the rest of pro cycling?

### Roadside views

For cycling fans out on Québec City's smart boulevards, having these Grands Prix are a big deal.

"It allows us to see all the teams and riders we watch on the TV," Larry Arkison tells me. "All the bike maniacs are here," adds his mate, Vincent Belanger. Both Québécois enthusiasts are kitted up and out on their bikes to watch the races.

Both agree they feel a real sense of privilege that of all the cities in North America, the WorldTour comes to theirs.

"We feel part of the big league," says Arkison. "It's not New York, it's not LA, it's not Chicago. After watching these guys all summer on the TV, they come here to our city."

It's easy to understand why, with a name like the WorldTour, the UCI would want to have races in North America. But why Québec City? Why Montréal? How come some of the stage races, in the neighbouring, more populous USA haven't got WorldTour status? While the Québec races are well-liked by locals, they've yet to have really caught the public imagination like the Yorkshire Grand Départ or London Olympics did in Britain. The pavements in Québec are hardly rammed with spectators.

Part of the answer lies in this Canadian province having history. Not history as in the Plains of Abraham battlefield that the Québec City event races across. Rather history in the Mont Royal battleground in Montréal where the 1974 World Road Championships and the 1976 Olympic road race were fought. Between 1988 and 1992, Mont Royal also hosted the Grand Prix des Amériques. But at the same time as UCI president Hein Verbruggen pushed for the sport's 'mondialisation', the governing body effectively killed this round of the World Cup by insisting the race moved dates from August to October as it reshaped the calendar.

"You need your snow tyres at that time of year," jokes race director Serge Arseneault. "I said no, and stopped running it."

### TV times

To fully understand these races is to understand the world of TV that Arsenault inhabits. A former presenter and commentator on CBC, he's now the owner of a Québécois production company and TV channel.

"Cycling is a passion but it's also a business," he says. "To have your race on the TV everywhere is the key success."

It was actually because an October date for the race would clash with NFL and ice hockey on the North American TV calendar that he called curtains on the GP des Amériques and instead focused his efforts in cycling on producing live Tour de France coverage.

But it was another calendar rejig that brought world-class cycle racing back to the province. When Formula 1 dropped the Canadian Grand Prix (which takes place on an island in the St Lawrence river) from its 2009 schedule, Arsenault saw a fresh opportunity.

"When Bernie [Ecclestone] took Formula 1, I was a little bit mad," he recalls. "I had been always a little bit involved so I phoned the mayors of Montréal and Québec and the Government of Canada and said: 'Guys, we've got to react.'"

"I realised if we want freedom to build something in the top sport, we have to own it, not [someone like] Bernie."

Arsenault considers Verbruggen a friend and soon came to an arrangement with the Dutchman's successor and close ally, Pat McQuaid. The pair agreed to an inflexible slot on the calendar and, after some negotiation, ProTour status (as it was then) for two one-day races.

"I knew it would be nonsense to bring teams over just for one race. At that time, I needed about 400 per cent the budget of a European race as I end up having the same expenses as a tour. Riders are here for seven days and there are hotels, food, vehicles, even chartering planes to consider."

While the two events offer pro cycling two decent races, Arsenault gets a TV product that he can produce to uncompromising standards and sell. Sponsored by national, provincial and city authorities, he insists he offers



### Domestic duties

## On home turf

For Ag2r rider Hugo Houle, the two Canadian races are among the most significant on his schedule. "I was born in a small village right in the middle between the two cities," says the local. "When I race in Europe no one knows me and they don't care. Here it's quite different. I'm the centre of attention."

"Maybe one day I'll do the Vuelta but otherwise I always try and be here."

Many of the Canadian riders on WorldTour teams do likewise, with the growing significance of the Tour of Alberta the week before giving them the opportunity for a more prolonged trip home. "Personally, I'm really proud that we have these events here," says Ryder Hesjedal. "It's really important for Canadian cycling."

Nonetheless, even he concedes that the timing of the races can be awkward: "Sometimes

it's a little frustrating when it's at the end of a long year and you want to perform well and you only have so much left."

For up-and-coming youngsters, the Québec races carry a different significance.

"We don't have a lot of big Canadian races, so this and the Tour of Alberta are huge for guys like me," says Benjamin Perry, who was on the Canadian national squad that take one of the four wild-card entries. "If I can be good enough every year to get on the national team then I can get a taste of the racing at this level."

Two other non-WorldTour teams invited to this year's event were Europcar and Bora-Argon 18 who both have sponsors with strong ties to Québec. Europcar's kit supplier Louis Garneau was founded in Québec City while bike company Argon 18 started out in Montréal.



## National treasure

# Maple: naturally Canadian

With Québec's federation of maple producers (FPAQ) among the races' sponsors, winners of each race were awarded a haul of maple products. Even without such prizes, maple sap and the tasty syrup that's derived from it is gaining a presence in the peloton as a credible sports supplement. Naturally occurring, it's widely regarded as a healthier source of sugar and the FPAQ is working with Québec's cycling federation and Canadian Olympic cycling hopefuls in promoting its benefits and further researching its qualities.

"All athletes need sugar; we're not saying they necessarily need more but that they should use a good sugar," says sports nutritionist Mélanie

Olivier. "Maple sap is packed with beneficial minerals and vitamins such as manganese, riboflavin, zinc and potassium."

While a number of companies such as Leo Desilets, Maple Fuel and Enduroforce are incorporating maple into sports products, maple is also being promoted as an ingredient athletes can put into homemade dishes.

The province of Québec produces about 71 per cent of the world's maple product with the rest coming from other eastern Canadian provinces and New England. Retiring Cannondale pro Ted King is another advocate — he works to promote Vermont company Untapped's maple sports products.

**Left** Despite obvious European influences, Québec's sense of space sets it apart

**Below** The weather eventually turned foul to give the Montréal GP an authentic Classics feel

But that's just one aspect of his personnel requirements. So insistent was Arsenault on creating an exemplary product when he relaunched top level racing in Québec Province in 2010, he brought over cameramen and moto drivers from the Tour de France.

Likewise he employed a TV producer from the Tour and paired him with another producer Ecclestone had hired.

"I knew we needed to have the perfect production people," he explains. "European and American television have a different beat and I needed a product to satisfy both audiences."

To the very point: these races are not necessarily designed to fit in with the rest of cycling. Their timing, format and location are all determined by how they fit into a bigger global media picture.

The gist of what Arsenault told the UCI in 1992 when they wanted to change the calendar seemed fairly applicable to my questions. "I told them: 'You have to face the world and not make decisions based on your knowledge of Europe,'" he recalls.

## New World Classics

The first of Arsenault's carefully sculpted TV products runs perfectly this year and comes with a suitably climactic finish. Urán takes a finely executed flyer in the finale of the GP Québec to hold off two versatile sprinters — Michael Matthews and Alexander Kristoff — in the uphill charge behind him. "It worked out exactly as the team planned to race it," the Etixx-Quick Step rider explains of this tactics. "We said we'd wait until the last few kilometres."

**"Cavendish isn't here for the same reason a marathon runner doesn't do the 100m"**

investors real returns. Much is made of the fact that the race is broadcast in 130 countries.

"I know cycling and I need the best riders there are to race this race," he says. "I know where the Formula 1 riders eat and stay and we use the same places. It's a gift for them to come here. But not just because of the hotels and all the lovely conditions. But because these are two tough races.

"There's no point having Froome or Nibali. But we have people like Philippe Gilbert and Rigoberto Urán. People ask why Mark Cavendish isn't here. I say, come on: this is not an exhibition. It's for the same reason a marathon runner doesn't do the 100m."



The Colombian's win was also a little bonus for the city's small Colombian community, who wait to pose for selfies with him outside the anti-doping control.

Two days later against the backdrop of downtown skyscrapers, the Montréal race starts in teeming rain but dries out a bit in the afternoon. Stood on a steep ramp near the back of the circuit, I watch Thomas Voeckler — pulling faces as ever — lead a small breakaway with a handful of laps to go. These 12-kilometre loops may be kermesse distance but the cracked road and sharp gradient conspire with grime-splattered faces in the significantly slimmed down bunch to remind me of Liège-Bastogne-Liège.

For all Arsenaault's drive for the perfect product, he has no control over the weather. Torrential rain returns during the closing couple of laps resulting in the live coverage feed of sodden riders in the flared headlights of following cars deteriorating to those frustrating static shots of an expectant finish line. With

terrible timing, the weather has downed the moto-camera transmission for the entirety of the final lap.

This means that Yates's decisive attack on the final, 17th, ascent of Mont Royal and Belgian Tim Wellens's subsequent effort to join him near the top can only be relayed verbally to the brave crowd enduring the weather at the finish. At least they get to see how the final kilometre plays out with a dead turn at 500m to go making use of both sides of a dual carriageway.

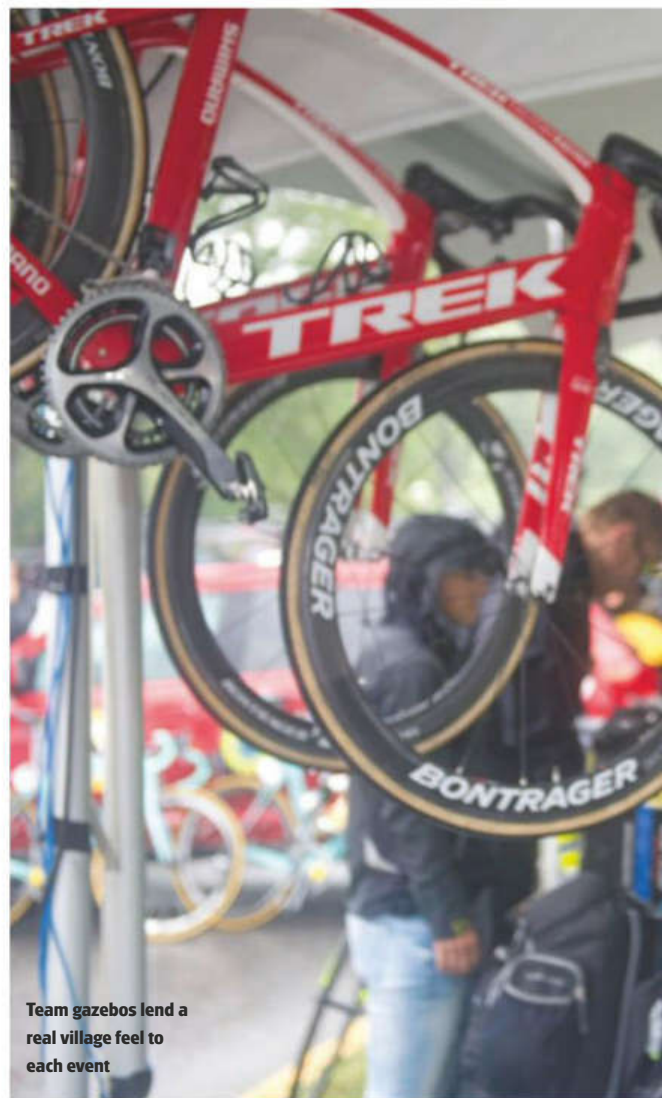
After Ardennes specialist Wellens outsprints his fellow up-and-coming climber, Yates helps fill in the blanks in the press conference.

"It wasn't just at the finish he was stronger but from the top of the climb all the way to the finish," he says.

"Tim came across to me and gave me a big turn straight away. All the run in towards the finish he was doing the most work and doing the biggest turns."

In the sprint, he adds: "My legs were pretty dead."

**"The cracked road and grime splattered faces conspire to remind me of Liège-Bastogne-Liège"**



Team gazebos lend a real village feel to each event

#### A promoter's dream

## Global audience for the Grands Prix

The slight quirks of these two Canadian races are nothing compared to what organiser Serge Arsenaault would like to do with the sport. The Québécois promoter has designs on promoting an America versus Europe competition like yachting, tennis and golf, possibly in a criterium format. "We need events that don't exceed 90 minutes," he says, "because networks have 90 minutes. The market needs something else for the international sponsor. We have to admit it, although some people don't like the truth.

"If I ran my business like we run cycling, I would have gone bankrupt 10 times."

Arsenaault's futurology is more than just

dreaming. The TV coverage from this year's Grand Prix made use of Bluetooth technology to broadcast power, cadence and heart-rate data from a selection of riders.

For three years at these races, he also tried out his other idea for a new format of cycling: a knockout sprint competition that pitted four pros against each other in a series of heats. Taking place on a 500m stretch of road that riders race out and back, he believes this could be exported as a world series to global cities like Paris, London, New York, Tokyo and Sydney. It should take place on weekday evenings, he proposes, and be carefully scheduled to avoid

clashes with other sports events on the international TV calendar.

Critically Arsenaault speaks the same language as organisations like Velon and the CPA, proposing to split the TV revenues three ways between riders, teams and promoters. A man whose views have been shaped by a lifetime working in the broadcast world, he dismisses the argument that cycling is too steeped in tradition to radicalise its formats: "The problem with cycling is not history. We can keep the history, all the prestigious races. But if you have a bad TV product and bad new media product, then your sport is dead."



If any further testament were needed as to how difficult and seriously the race was taken, though, it happens unwittingly when I sit down with Michał Kwiatkowski afterwards in the nearby Delta Hotel.

Having just completed his last race before it was up for renewal in Richmond, we'd arranged to talk about his year in the rainbow jersey. Somewhere in the conversation, though, the Pole describes the Montréal race as "the hardest classic of the year".

Asked to elaborate, Kwiatkowski explains how the first hour had been flat-out and how hotly contested both races had been.

"I think they're really modern races, doing such a short lap in the city," he says. "They're beautiful actually. You're really racing from the start. They should be considered classic."

END

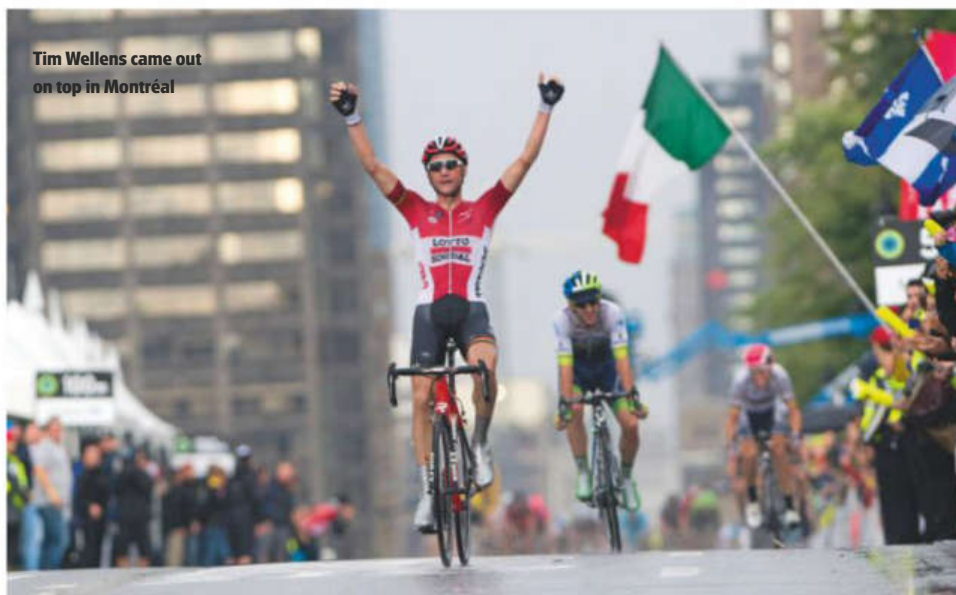
#### Canada dry run



## Perfect practice for the Worlds?

The Québec and Montréal Grands Prix offered another draw this year in that they took place just one week ahead and (a relatively mere) 600 miles north of the World Championships kicking off (with the team time trial) in Richmond, Virginia. As well as the obvious logistical benefits, there's a reasonable argument that the 12km urban circuits of both races — with regular passages through pits — follow a similar format to the Worlds road race and should make for good practice. It was certainly a view potential contenders Michael Matthews, Alexander Kristoff and defending champ Michał Kwiatkowski were subscribing to. Then again, it's widely held that the more sustained efforts at either the Tour of Britain or the Vuelta a España are the superior preparation for someone with their eye on the rainbow stripes. The eventual result shall tell.

#### Tim Wellens came out on top in Montréal








G R E A T E S T   E V E R

# Worlds showdowns

*Chris Sidwells* looks back over the last 50 years and picks 15 outstanding races which show what the elite World Championships road race is all about



**S**ome say that the Road Race World Championships are incongruous, that the race fails in its purpose of finding the best road racer in the world each year. They suggest a season-long points competition, like the WorldTour, is a better way of revealing who is the world's best cyclist.

Such competitions exist, and they always have done, but they don't generate one tenth of the interest or the atmosphere of the Worlds. Neither do they carry the kudos of winning the title and putting on the rainbow jersey that same day. Plus, asking the riders to put everything down on one race is a

great way of finding the world's best single-day rider. Single-day races are about getting it together for one big occasion, and coming out the winner. The Worlds does that: not many duds have won it.

And finally there is the intrigue of the Worlds. For 365 days a year the riders are members of sponsored teams and are paid by those teams. In the World Championships that's forgotten, and the riders compete for their nations. At least in theory they do, it doesn't always happen, not in the men's race, and that's another layer that makes elite road Worlds intriguing. It might not be perfect but it sure is exciting.

## San Sebastian, Spain, 1965 Simpson in the rain

Tom Simpson's groundbreaking victory, the first by a Brit in the pro Worlds, stands out as a great example of how to win a single-day race. Simpson only attacked twice on a hilly rain-lashed circuit on Spain's northern coast, and both moves were decisive.

The British team in 1965 was a mixed bunch. It had a small nucleus of full-time racers based in Europe, plus a few part-timers from the UK. Simpson had finished fourth in the pro Worlds twice, and he'd been ninth. He'd also won several Classics, he was accepted by the European peloton as one of the best riders around, and he was flying.

Having crashed out of the 1965 Tour, Simpson prepared carefully for the Worlds and by September 5 he was in the form of his life. The race started fast, with the Spanish riders putting on a show.

"Tom asked me to go with any early break, so I went with the Spanish riders. Some Portuguese joined in and the group worked well, with me just tapping through, not committing, but we gained time," Simpson's Great Britain team-mate Barry Hoban remembers.

Simpson waited and watched. With the Spanish escape moving further away on every lap he decided that with a bit more firepower the group could stay away. He attacked and Rudi Altig, Karl-Heinz Kunde, Peter Post, Franco Balmamion and Roger Swerts reacted. They were among the race favourites, and they quickly bridged the gap.

"When they caught us it was different," says Hoban. "It meant Germany, Holland, Britain, Italy, Belgium, Spain and Portugal were represented at the front, and there was no French riders there. France would be the only ones chasing behind. It was still early in the race, but this was the winning move, so I started riding hard."

Most of the others rode hard too, but a couple, Balmamion especially, still wouldn't commit. "We were hammering along and Tom kept asking me, 'How are you feeling, Barry?' I kept telling him I was feeling a bit knackered.

"Then after a while he said, 'Look, if you feel like falling off, fall off in front of Balmamion.' But Tom didn't have to worry, a lap later he attacked on the big climb, and Rudi Altig was the only one who could go with him."

Simpson and Altig knew each other, their styles gelled. Altig agreed not to push too hard on the flat if Simpson kept it steady on the climbs, and that's how they pulled away, with nobody able to make any impression on their growing lead. All Simpson had to do now was beat Altig, a former world pursuit champion and a rapid sprinter.

They agreed there'd be no tactics, instead they worked equally until one kilometre to go, then they parted; Simpson on one side of the road, Altig on the other. But as they did, and just as Altig was shifting gear, Simpson went. He led all the way down the finishing straight, watching Altig's shadow in the wet road surface. For 500 metres the shadow was there, with Simpson expecting the German to come past, but he didn't.

Then the shadow was gone, and the line flashed under Simpson's wheels — he'd won. Tom Simpson was champion of the world.





## Heerlen, Holland, 1967 Burton dominates

The great Beryl Burton had already won the world road title once, in 1960, and had five pursuit titles to her name, but this year she was a class apart in the road race.

Burton lost her world pursuit title to Ludmilla Zadorozhnaya earlier in the week, finishing third, but 1967 was the year when Burton set the British record for a 12-hour time trial, beating all the men to ride 277.25 miles. It was an incredible performance, one that must have dampened her track speed, but made her super-strong on the road.

In the World Championships Burton rode like there was nobody else there. She hit the front in the first two miles then attacked until only Zadorozhnaya could follow her. They shared the work at first, then the Russian couldn't come through, then she was gone. Burton finished one minute and 47 seconds ahead of

Zadorozhnaya and nearly six minutes clear of the rest, and the race was only 55 kilometres, hardly long enough for Burton to warm up.

The cycling world was so impressed by Burton she was invited to take part in the professional GP des Nations, which was a male-only pro TT and effectively the Time Trial World Championships. She rode the same course as the pros on the same day, but well separated from them, so she had no competitors to measure her effort. She rode the 73.5-kilometre course at an average speed of 41.55kph. The winner, the 1965 Tour de France winner Felice Gimondi, averaged 47.5kph, but Burton wasn't far behind the tail-enders in the men's event. Those full-time pros must have sweated when they realised a female Yorkshire farm worker was close to beating them.

## Mendrisio, Switzerland, 1971

# Merckx and Gimondi go head-to-head

Eddy Merckx is the greatest male road racer ever, his victories and the way he won say so, but Felice Gimondi was a class act too. So good that if Merckx had been a footballer, or a shopkeeper, we might be saying that Gimondi was the greatest ever. Gimondi handles the collision of their careers with good grace now, but when they raced he handled it by picking races to go head-to-head with Merckx. Mendrisio was one of them.

It was a hard circuit, a hilly one, a contrast to Leicester the year before, where Gimondi finished second and Merckx was shackled by team tactics. There was nothing tactical about Mendrisio. It followed the normal Worlds template, a wearing down process until the strongest emerged in the last few laps. They were Eddy Merckx and Felice Gimondi. They left the rest and quickly

established a lead, then Gimondi started attacking. He really went for it, jumping clear time after time and forcing Merckx to chase.

It was no avail, the race came down to a sprint, which the more explosive Merckx won, but that victory was special. Merckx punched the air as he crossed the line, and kept punching it afterwards. He'd beaten his closest rival when that rival was on top form. Merckx's joy was a tribute to Gimondi's class.





## Gap, France, 1972 An Italian one-two

Gap may be surrounded by mountains, but the roads here aren't as testing as they are further into the Alps. The 1972 Worlds course was rolling rather than hilly, and a group of eight were left at the kill. They were all good riders, but three were Italian and one of those Italians was a sprinter.

Imagine if Bradley Wiggins, Geraint Thomas and Mark Cavendish were clear with four others in the last five kilometres of the Worlds today — it would only end one way. But in 1972, instead of waiting to lead out Marino Basso, the sprinter whose nickname was 'Mr 100,000 Volts', Franco Bitossi went for it himself.

He didn't get a big gap; the others, under the impetus of the Dane Leif Mortensen and Belgium's Frans Verbeek held him, then gained, but only very slowly. Bitossi could have held on, except Basso was sat behind the chasers looking at a world title disappearing up the road with his sprinter's overdrive button untouched. Basso just couldn't sit there and let Bitossi take a title he knew he himself could win, so he unleashed his sprint, all 100,000V of it, and blew right by Bitossi. Basso won, Bitossi was second and Cyrille Guimard of France was third.



## Yvoir, Belgium, 1975 The best Belgian team ever, but a Dutchman won

There is no doubt about it, the 1970s was Belgium's decade. Any race that Eddy Merckx didn't win, there was a De Vlaeminck, a Verbeek, a Leman, a Maertens or Vanspringel ready and able to take it.

But when they came together for the Worlds, settling their pro team rivalries often looked more important than riding for their country. A super-strong Belgian team lined up for the Worlds in Yvoir, but they let a Dutchman win. There was a big clue what might happen the previous day at the Belgian team meeting. "The manager asked which of us felt we could win, and everybody put their hand up," Frans Verbeek recalls.

In the end they marked each other out and on the last lap Hennie Kuiper took a flyer, just like he had in the 1972 Olympic Games. The other riders waited for the Belgians to do something about Kuiper, but they just looked at each other. Nobody would budge, Kuiper won and Roger De Vlaeminck led the rest for second place, banging his handlebars in frustration as he crossed the line.

## Valkenburg, Holland, 1979 Raas delivers

It's reckoned that over 200,000 people packed the Worlds circuit in 1979. The noise was deafening when 'Mr Nails' Jan Raas won for the home nation.

Raas, a mild looking man, was a fierce competitor, and he wasn't going to be beaten that day. He had everything covered, and had total backing from his team. One Dutch rider even pushed Raas part way up the final climb. Then Raas got a lucky break when Giovanni Battaglin crashed near the end. Raas outsprinted Germany's Dietrich Thurau to win. It couldn't have happened any other way.



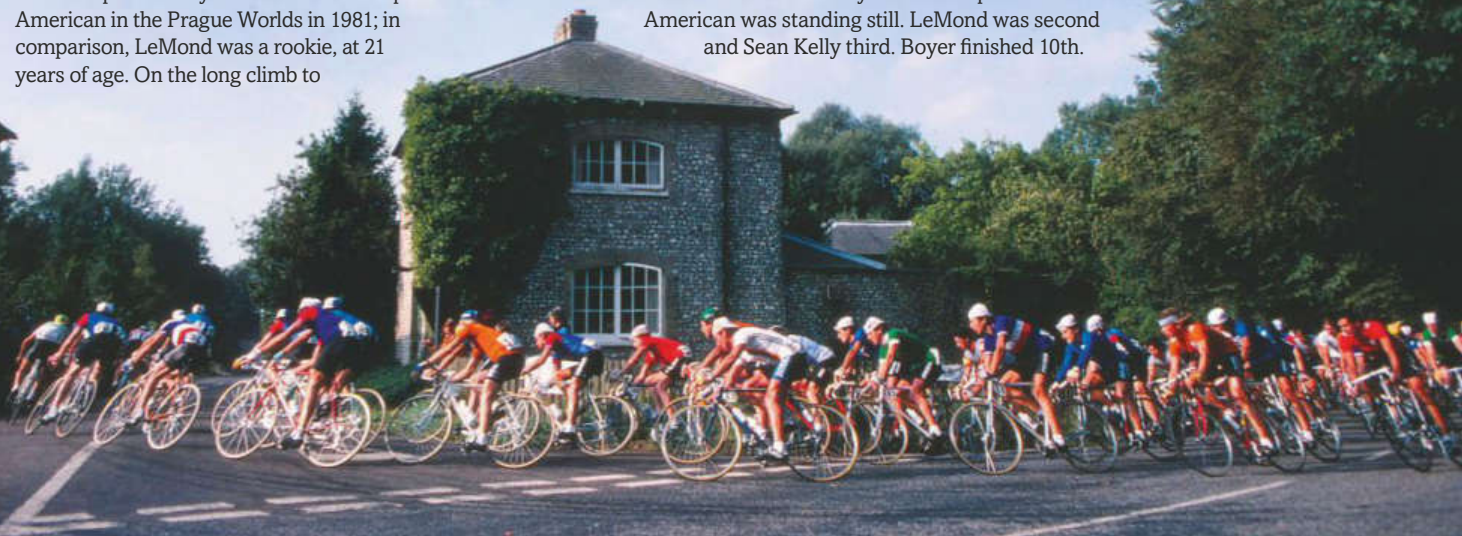
## Goodwood, Great Britain, 1982

### LeMond chases Boyer and sets up Saronni

Two Americans, Greg LeMond and Jonathan Boyer, had a very good chance of winning in Goodwood; only there was another dynamic going. LeMond and Boyer were the first Americans to get established in European pro cycling. Professional bike racing wasn't highly developed back in the States, so the best-placed American in the pro Worlds was automatically deemed the national champion.

Boyer was good. He had finished fifth behind Bernard Hinault in the 1980 Sallanches Worlds, which was a measure of his class because the Sallanches course was tough and Hinault was on top form. Boyer was also the best placed American in the Prague Worlds in 1981; in comparison, LeMond was a rookie, at 21 years of age. On the long climb to

the finish with about three kilometres to go, Boyer went for it again in Goodwood. It was a powerful attack, and the Italians had done so much work they couldn't answer it. It was left to Dutch rider Johan van der Velde to try to haul Boyer back, but as the metres ticked down he made no impression. Boyer was pulling away, and at first LeMond looked to be doing the dutiful team-mate job by pedalling easily behind van der Velde. Then he attacked, which was just what Giuseppe Saronni needed. The gap to Boyer began to shrink, and LeMond's wheel was the sling-shot Saronni needed to launch himself after Boyer. He went past like the American was standing still. LeMond was second and Sean Kelly third. Boyer finished 10th.



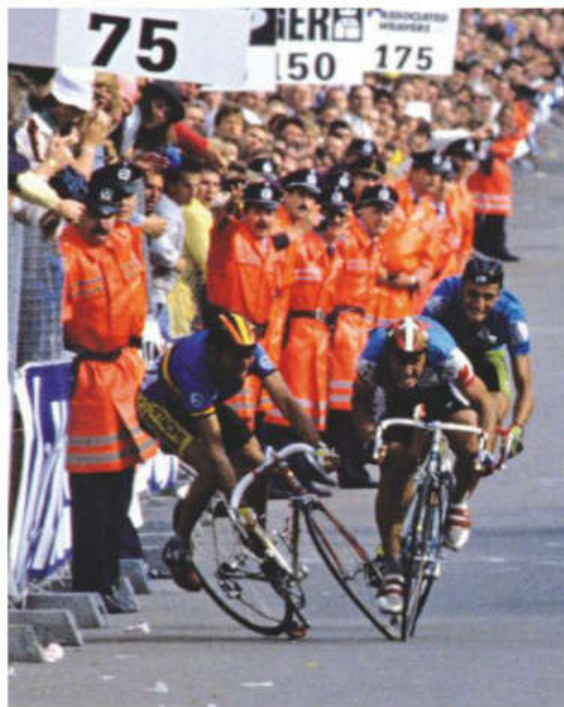
## Renaix, Belgium, 1987 Bauer and Criquelion clash

The big favourite in 1987 was Claude Criquelion, who lived just a few miles from that year's course. Despite the pressure he must have felt, the Belgian waited until the final lap to attack from the front group. A young Italian, Maurizio Fondriest, was the only rider who could follow him.

As they approached the finish line Criquelion was riding hard with Fondriest behind, looking relaxed. Then, just inside the final kilometre, the pair were caught by Canada's Steve Bauer. Within seconds Criquelion and Bauer started to sprint, with Fondriest nicely placed on the Canadian's wheel.

Inside 200 metres Bauer led, with Criquelion trying to overtake him on his right, going close to the barriers. At the same time Fondriest made his move on their left. Bauer then shifted slightly to his right, squeezing Criquelion who clipped the barriers and fell. Bauer, stunned by what happened, stopped sprinting as Fondriest swept over the line with both arms in air to take the title.

Bauer was disqualified, and Criquelion later took him to court to sue for losing the title. He didn't succeed, a verdict Fondriest agreed with. "Bauer didn't knock Criquelion from his bike, I don't think he should have even been disqualified," Fondriest told *Cycle Sport* a few years ago. "As Criquelion began to overtake, Bauer reached down for his down tube lever with his right hand. When he reached for it he moved slightly to his right. As that happened we came to a point in the road where the barriers were angled inwards. There was no room, so Criquelion fell. In my opinion it was an accident and Criquelion should not have tried to pass on the inside."



## Chambéry, France, 1989 LeMond completes his comeback

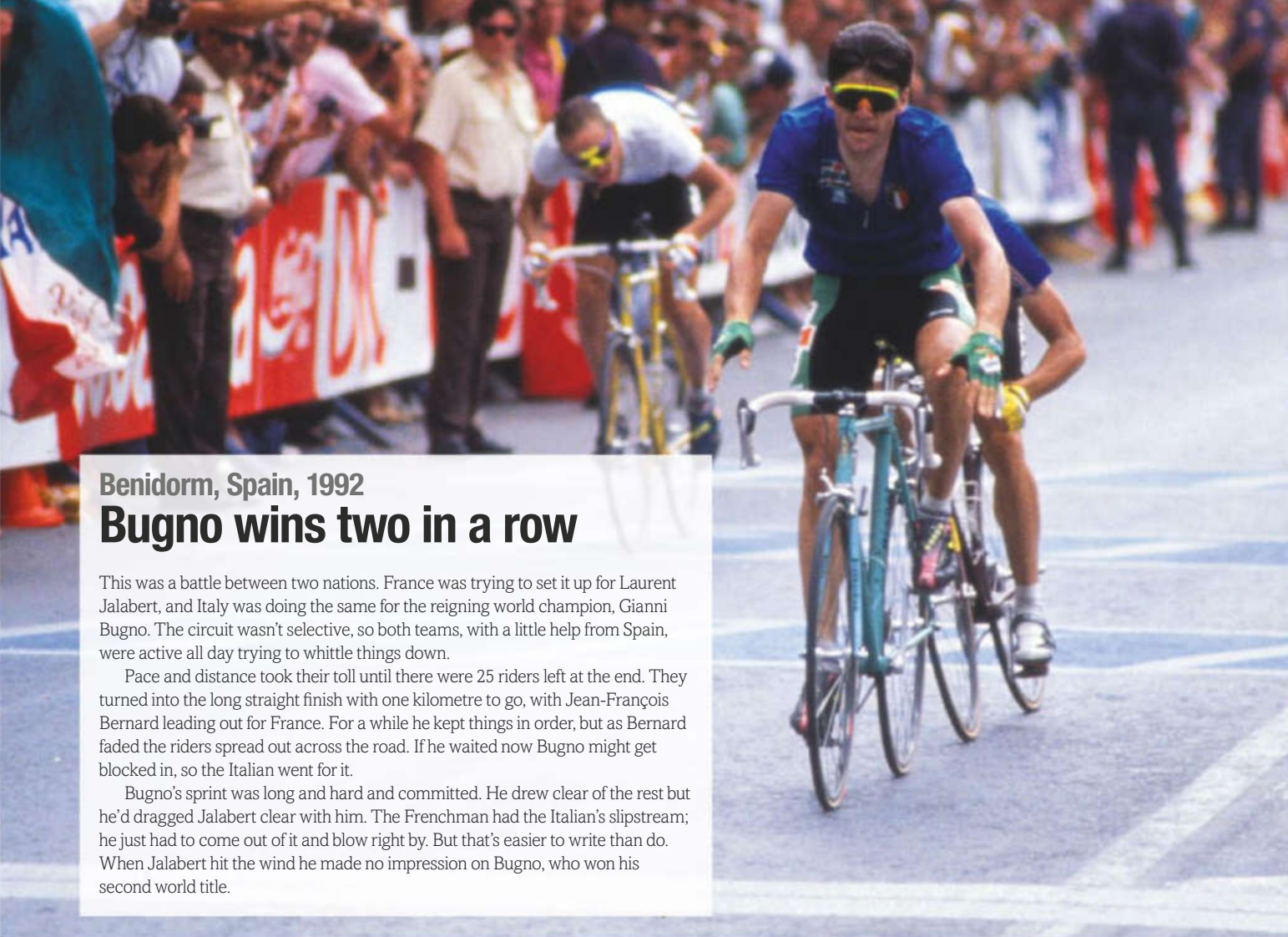
Greg LeMond had just won the 1989 Tour de France after a tough drawn-out comeback from being shot in a hunting accident. It was his second Tour victory after 1986, and evidence of what he could have done in 1987 and 1988 if he hadn't been out of action. Now LeMond was out to win his second world title.

He did it with little team support by patiently

working his way into position. Then after being crafty, LeMond was bold. With just a few riders left, he stopped relying on others to close the gaps and closed them himself. No one could take the initiative off him on the last lap; then he was superior in the sprint.

LeMond led out with 200 metres to go and the others couldn't get by. Dimitri Konyshev,

who been out front all day took second place, and Sean Kelly was third. He'd chosen the wrong gear for a fast sprint, 53x13. It was no match for the huge 54x12 LeMond pushed round. No one was as strong as Greg LeMond that day, and because of the lead pellets left in his body poisoning him, LeMond would never be as strong again.



## Benidorm, Spain, 1992 Bugno wins two in a row

This was a battle between two nations. France was trying to set it up for Laurent Jalabert, and Italy was doing the same for the reigning world champion, Gianni Bugno. The circuit wasn't selective, so both teams, with a little help from Spain, were active all day trying to whittle things down.

Pace and distance took their toll until there were 25 riders left at the end. They turned into the long straight finish with one kilometre to go, with Jean-François Bernard leading out for France. For a while he kept things in order, but as Bernard faded the riders spread out across the road. If he waited now Bugno might get blocked in, so the Italian went for it.

Bugno's sprint was long and hard and committed. He drew clear of the rest but he'd dragged Jalabert clear with him. The Frenchman had the Italian's slipstream; he just had to come out of it and blow right by. But that's easier to write than do. When Jalabert hit the wind he made no impression on Bugno, who won his second world title.



## Oslo, Norway, 1993 Armstrong, a kid in the rain

Everything Lance Armstrong won from 1998 onwards has been struck through, but this one still stands. It was his first full pro season, he was still learning, but he was already winning.

The race was held on a 14km urban course, and it poured with rain. Riders were crashing all over the place, but 22-year-old Armstrong rode a mature race, avoiding the crashes and following everything until the last lap. Then he threw caution to the wind. He attacked up one hill, pushed it as much as he dared on the descent, then went again on the next hill. That second attack broke everybody — he was clear.

His celebrations were joyful, exuberant and genuine. He won in emphatic style beating Miguel Indurain, Olaf Ludwig, Johan Museeuw and Maurizio Fondriest.



## Duitama, Colombia, 1995 Olano wins on a flat tyre

This was a very Spanish World Championships. Miguel Indurain had already won the time trial title days before, with Abraham Olano in second place. They and their Spanish team then dominated the road race, which was held at altitude and on one of the hardest courses for years.

Olano was something of a mini-mig. Strong against the clock and good in stage races, he even looked a bit like Indurain. Olano just wasn't quite as good. This, however, was to be Olano's day. The two dominated to such an extent that the world title came down to which one attacked first, and that was Olano. He soloed to victory, letting nothing get in his way, including a puncture with one kilometre to go. Olano simply carried on to finish on a flat tyre.

## 2002, Zolder, Belgium Super Mario

Mario Cipollini was the fastest man in cycling throughout 2002 and the course on Zolder's motor-racing circuit was made for a sprinter. Unsurprisingly, the Italian team chased down every attack, and did everything they could to ensure the race ended in a sprint. They then executed a near perfect lead-out. There was a crash in the finale, which made their job a little easier, but nonetheless, sprint rivals Robbie McEwen and Erik Zabel didn't even get out from behind Cipo's slipstream.



2011, Copenhagen, Denmark

## Cav and Team GB play their hand perfectly



The 2011 road race had echoes of the race in Zolder nine years previously, with the best sprinter of a generation winning. But it wasn't quite as straightforward for Mark Cavendish as it had been for Mario Cipollini. The British team controlled the race all day by riding on the front. It was an energy-sapping tactic, but they had the horsepower to do it. In the final kilometres Bradley Wiggins did a massive turn at 50kph, while weaving left and right across the road so nobody could attack.

With most of the British team spent, the plan for the finale was to have Geraint Thomas and Ian Stannard protect Cavendish, and let another team do the lead-out. However no one nation took control of the last two kilometres. Stannard in particular, used his big shoulders to make space and held Cav's position in the madness of the final two kilometres. Then Thomas took over. The Welshman held his position in the top ten, but by the time they swung in to the final straight Cavendish had already jumped onto another wheel.

Cavendish was then on his own but nicely placed in the wheels. There looked to be room on the left, but Cavendish went right, where it seemed he would be boxed in. Not to Cav it didn't. He knew where the wind was coming from and therefore where gaps would open up. He sailed through a gap as it opened and sprinted clear of Australia's Matt Goss, to become Britain's first world road race champion for 46 years.

2013, Florence, Italy

## Marianne Vos reigns supreme

We've saved the best till last. Nobody has ever won an elite road race world title whilst also being the reigning cyclo-cross world champion, but when Marianne Vos crossed the line in 2013 she had done it twice in succession.

It was her third road race world title. She has won seven cyclo-cross world titles, two track world titles and two Olympic gold medals. With that

record she is arguably the best all-round cyclist there has ever been.

Winning is never easy, never simple, but Vos makes it look easy. In Florence she rode away from her rivals on a stiff climb. They chased, but they never made an impression, and she won by 15 seconds. She was smiling, naturally, but she never stops smiling. She won't stop winning any time soon either.



# Battle of Britain

The modern Tour of Britain has been lauded for tough stages that create exciting racing. We celebrate the UK's biggest race over the next eight pages

Pics Andy Jones, Theo Southee







**Above:** Ian Bibby secures more valuable King of the Mountains points on Bleara Moor; the NFTO rider finished a point off the podium in fourth

**Right:** Elia Viviani signs an autograph for a young admirer shortly after the riders' presentation



**Above:** A warning shot to any eager young riders planning an early attack?

**Left:** Wout Poels on his way to victory on Hartside Fell. The Sky rider caught and passed eventual GC winner Edvald Boasson Hagen (second from left) on the line

**Far right:** André Greipel edges Elia Viviani and Sondre Holst Enger to win stage seven on the flatlands of Suffolk

**Right:** Nantwich Cycling Group enjoyed a break from the club run with a trip west to North Wales. This shy bunch were spotted on the Bwlch





**Left:** "Come on, Mum, we're being dropped!"  
What better way to get fit *and* see the race?

**Below:** Snowdonia's Llanberis Pass was part of  
a stunning opening stage as the peloton snaked  
it's way through North Wales to Wrexham



**Right:** Hartside Fell provided the race's only summit finish, on stage five. Poels's and Boasson Hagen's break stuck, leaving the rest of the pack to scrap it out for the minor placings

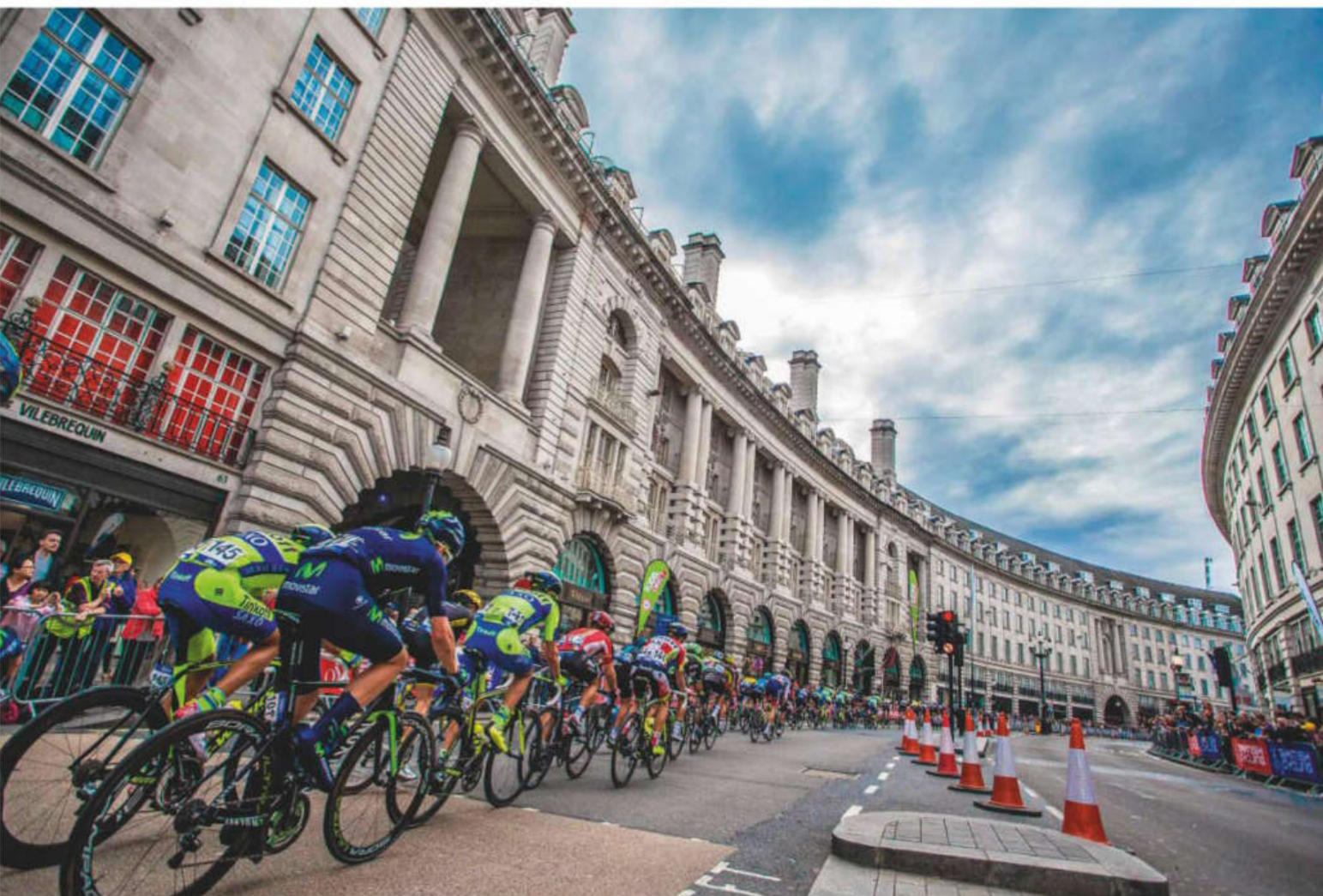
**Bottom right:** National champion Peter Kennaugh leads the way out of Beeley as the race flashes through the Derbyshire Dales on stage six





**Left:** Ullswater sparkles in the September sunshine as an ambitious trio try to grab an early advantage on the descent to Pooley Bridge

**Below:** Tyler Farrar was awarded a huge wheel of pungent blue cheese for most combative rider. We're as bemused as he is





**Above:** Edinburgh provided the cobbled section to soften the riders' legs before the long journey south to Newcastle



**Left:** Formation flying for the domestic squads as Raleigh-GAC and One are led by Sir Bradley Wiggins, leader of his eponymous team

**Opposite page:** London's Regent Street provided the setting for the start and finish on the final stage — a match for the Champs-Elysées?

# VUELTA IN BRIEF

The opening week of the Vuelta a España had a little bit of everything: course controversy, new names coming to the fore, old names returning to form, and a close battle for the GC

Words Chris Marshall-Bell Photos Graham Watson, Yuzuru Sunada, Cor Vos

STAGE 1: PUERTO BANÚS > MARBELLA, 7.4KM TTT

## Beach-hugging TTT farce



BMC took a narrow win in the controversial TTT

The furore surrounding the narrow, sand-strewn route of the Vuelta's opening team time trial resulted in team managers agreeing times would not count towards the general classification and that their teams wouldn't race it. But put nine riders on bikes and a finish line in front of them,

and what's going to happen? BMC out-rode Tinkoff-Saxo and Orica-GreenEdge by one second to give Peter Velits a ceremonial red jersey. Some teams did stick to the agreement not to race. Europcar and Cannondale-Garmin

**1**  
Peter Velits is the first Slovak ever to lead any of the three Grand Tours

were 2.15 and 1.20 in arrears (respectively) after riding it like a jolly Saturday evening pedal along Marbella's promenade. Which it was, essentially. Team Sky didn't risk injury either; their time was 1.11 short of BMC's.

Chaves takes the mountaintop win



**29.02**

Fabian Cancellara's time deficit to Chaves, placing him second-last. He retired on stage three with stomach flu

STAGE 2: ALHAURÍN DE LA TORRE > CAMINITO DEL REY, 158.7KM

## Surprise Colombian climber victory

Given the summit finish, it was no surprise that a diminutive Colombian won. With 1,300m remaining, Nairo Quintana was heading up the pack, with Tom Dumoulin and Nicolas Roche in close attendance. But Quintana was dropped; his countryman Esteban Chaves then surged forwards and got the better of time-triallist-cum-surprise-climber Dumoulin before the line to take the lead. Quintana did gain a few seconds on his GC rivals and had one less to worry about. Vincenzo Nibali was thrown off the race after being caught holding on to his Astana team car when chasing back to the peloton from a crash.

Sagan finally broke his long barren spell



STAGE 3: MIJAS > MÁLAGA, 158.4KM

## Sagan wins at last

After 780 days, 10 second places, five third places and a total of 25 top-five finishes, Peter Sagan won a Grand Tour stage. "It's been funny!" was the Slovak's tongue-in-cheek response to his infamous barren run, which stretched back to stage seven of the 2013 Tour de France. The Tinkoff-Saxo rider held off

Frenchman Nacer Bouhanni's late surge, while John Degenkolb finished third. The former's second place was impressive: he had clawed back a time gap of more than a minute to the peloton following a late crash.

4

Vuelta stage victories Peter Sagan has to his name. He also won three in 2011 when he rode for the Liquigas team

STAGE 4: ESTEPONA > VEJER DE LA FRONTERA, 209.6KM

## Valverde powers past Sagan

It was back to the familiarity of second place for Peter Sagan. A punishing uphill finish in Vejer de la Frontera wasn't suited to a pure sprinter's skillset, but Sagan showed his versatility once again, powering to a spot on the podium. Alejandro Valverde had the edge on Sagan and Daniel Moreno in the final surge for the line. Nicolas Roche, loosened of domestique roles and eyeing up stage wins, attempted another audacious but ultimately fruitless attack late on to place fourth.

12

years separating Valverde's first Vuelta stage-win and this, his ninth



Valverde took his ninth Vuelta stage win

STAGE 6: CÓRDOBA > SIERRA DE CAZORLA, 200.3KM

## Chaves reclaims red jersey

The comfort of the first rest day was still a distant four sleeps away, but already the first week was being awarded to Esteban Chaves. The 25-year-old's breakthrough race continued aplomb on stage six, when he launched a winning attack on the stage's final steep slopes to reclaim the red jersey. Brit Stephen Cummings jumped off the front of the breakaway with 10km remaining but the gradients bit at two kilometres to go, forcing the Merseysider to a near standstill. At that point, Cummings was overtaken by Chaves, Dan Martin and then-leader Tom Dumoulin, with the latter two finishing five seconds shy of the Colombian. The other GC contenders rolled home together, 11 seconds behind.

29

number of stages won by a Colombian rider in the Vuelta's history, the most by a non-European country



Chaves ended the week on a high note

STAGE 5: ROTA > ALCALÁ DE GUADÁIRA, 167.3KM

## Ewan's Grand Tour emergence

The dominant force of the Orica-GreenEdge youth wing changed hands upon arrival in Alcalá de Guadaira: Esteban Chaves relinquished his red jersey to Tom Dumoulin, to trail by one second, but 21-year-old Caleb Ewan sprinted to his maiden Grand Tour victory. The highly-rated

1

Ewan is the first neo-pro to win a stage of a Grand Tour this year

Australian timed his sprint on the slight uphill finish to perfection, passing a fading John Degenkolb and Peter Sagan to win by a comfortable two bike lengths. Ewan already had 10 wins to his name this year, including a Tour of Korea general classification, but this was the pocket rocket's penetration into the WorldTour sprinting alliance.

## STAGE 7: JODAR &gt; LA ALPUJARRA, 191.1KM

## Lindeman's poker face triumphs

Bert-Jan Lindeman, LottoNL-Jumbo's little-known 26-year-old, delivered a masterclass in bluffing as he rode to his first ever Grand Tour stage win. Lindeman, Lampre-Merida's Ilia Koshevoy and Europcar's Jérôme Cousin were the surviving members of the day's breakaway as they crept toward the summit finish, admirably keeping the group of GC contenders at bay.

Lindeman was repeatedly dropped and looked to be in all sorts of pain but kept clawing his way back to his companions. In the final kilometre he rounded Cousin — who clipped Koshevoy's back wheel and stepped off his bike — and then left behind the Lampre rider before the line. Fabio Aru was the day's other winner, putting seven seconds into his overall rivals.



2

Lindeman is only the second Dutchman to win a mountain stage at the Vuelta. Bart Voskamp was the last in 1994

Lindeman toyed with his rivals to take the stage

## STAGE 8: PUEBLA DE DON FADRIQUE &gt; MURCIA, 182.5KM

## Crashes mar Stuyven's win



5.27

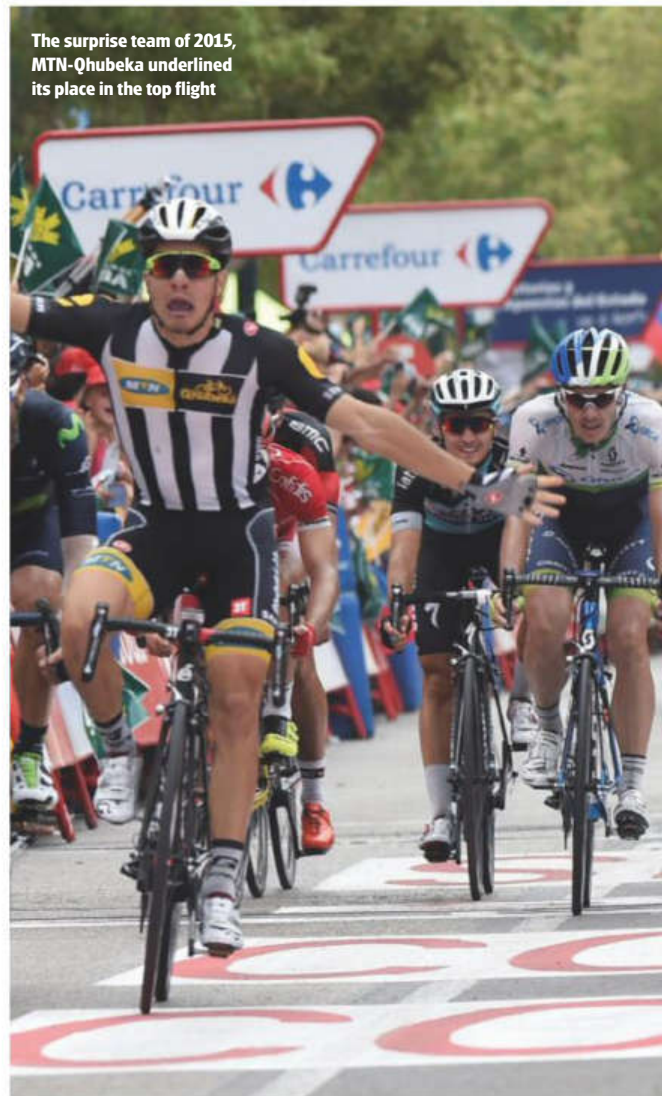
The time Sagan, who had identified this stage as a possible victory, finished behind winner Stuyven

Sagan was taken out by a motorbike late in the stage

Despite suffering a fractured scaphoid that would rule him out of the rest of the race, Jasper Stuyven's first ever Grand Tour stage win failed to make the headlines of this stage. Tejay van Garderen, Dan Martin, Nacer Bouhanni and Kris Boeckmans all abandoned courtesy of crash injuries, the latter now

recovering having been initially placed in a medically induced coma. But the stage will be best remembered for a motorbike incident that knocked green jersey-wearing Peter Sagan off his bike in the final kilometres. The Slovak abandoned after the finish and Tinkoff-Saxo slammed the "reckless" driving.

The surprise team of 2015, MTN-Qhubeka underlined its place in the top flight



## STAGE 9: TORREVIEJA &gt; CUMBRE DEL SOL, 168.3KM

## Dumoulin: serious GC contender

Tom Dumoulin proved once again that he is no one-trick pony, negotiating gradients of 19 per cent on the final 3.5km climb to win the stage and retake the leader's jersey. The Dutchman finished two seconds ahead of Chris Froome — who showed his intent of winning the Tour/Vuelta double — at the top of a steep climb. Esteban Chaves's reign in the race leader's red jersey seemed over for good as he was left crawling up to the finish 59 seconds behind Dumoulin. Home favourite Joaquim Rodríguez was third.

14

Breakaway riders, the race's most thus far. All were pulled back with 10km to go



**STAGE 10: VALENCIA > CASTELLON, 146.6KM**

## Sbaragli faster than Degenkolb

This MTN-Qhubeka team isn't too bad at Grand Tours, is it? Fresh from its Tour de France stage winning exploits, the Pro Continental African team added a Vuelta stage to its impressive 2015 results as Kristian Sbaragli sprinted to victory. The 25-year-old Italian's third ever professional win came at the expense of John Degenkolb, who despite having been teed up by leader Tom Dumoulin, wrecked his own chances with a messy and ill-timed sprint. Equally eyebrow-raising was the size of the break, with 37 riders escaping the peloton — a lot more than yesterday's 14. They were eventually reeled back in as a group that size can lack coordination.

**324**

Sbaragli's win was the 324<sup>th</sup> Grand Tour stage win by a Tuscan

Froome was forced to abandon with a broken foot



**STAGE 11: ANDORRA LA VELLA > CORTALS D'ENCAMP, 138KM**

## Crash ends Froome's Vuelta

The Andorran route designed by Joaquim Rodríguez was hyped as one of the toughest ever Grand Tour stages. But with six categorised climbs and over 5,000m of ascent, the stage turned into a war of attrition rather than a battle royal. Chris Froome was the high-profile casualty. A crash early in the stage saw him suffer to the finish (while getting abuse on Twitter from Oleg Tinkov) with a fractured navicular in his foot. Sky-bound Mikel Landa (Astana) rode to victory, apparently against team orders, with team-mate Fabio Aru finishing second and claiming the leader's red jersey. Previous incumbents Tom Dumoulin and Esteban Chaves finished together 2-59 behind, while Nairo Quintana's poor show left him more than three minutes in arrears to Aru. Elsewhere, Tinkoff-Saxo lost another rider to a motorbike incident, Sérgio Paulinho colliding with one on a corner.

**50**

Landa is the 50<sup>th</sup> Basque rider to have won a stage of the Vuelta

Dumoulin's determination was too much for Froome



## STAGE 12: ESCALDES-ENGORDANY &gt; LLEIDA, 173KM

## Puncture doesn't deflate Dutchman

The misfortune of suffering a puncture in the final 10 kilometres has ruined many a bike rider's chances of success. Not Trek Factory Racing's Danny Van Poppel, however. A mechanic quickly swapped the Dutchman's ill-timed flat tyre, and he worked his way back to the front of the chasing bunch, which caught Maxime Bouet and Jaco Venter in the final 200 metres. By this time Van Poppel had begun his sprint. Hopes are high for the 22-year-old and his stage victory was another nod to the plethora of victorious young riders who prospered in the race. Aru remained in red.

**1,500**  
Number of days  
Italian riders have led  
Grand Tours — more  
than any other  
nation



## STAGE 13: CALATAYUD &gt; TARAZONA, 178KM

## Oliveira's perfect breakaway win

It is only in time trials that national champions in the discipline get to wear jerseys decorated in their country's colours. But try telling current and three-time Portuguese time trial champion Nelson Oliveira that he can only show off his time trialling skills on pre-designated days. Oliveira broke away

**2007**  
The last time a  
Lampre-sponsored  
team won at least six  
Grand Tour stages  
in a season

from a 24-man escape group with 27 kilometres to go and won a minute ahead of his former breakaway companions. There was no change in the GC standings, but Nairo Quintana did lose contact with the peloton and had to be paced back before finishing at the same time as his rivals.

## STAGE 14: VITORIA &gt; ALTO CAMPOO, 215KM

## Aru gains and loses

Another summit finish in the Vuelta after a tedious preceding 200km saw more shuffling in the general classification positions, although the time differences were minuscule. Alessandro De Marchi won from the breakaway and five places behind was Nairo Quintana, who appeared to have shrugged off an illness. He took six and seven seconds respectively from Joaquim Rodríguez and Fabio Aru. It was the latter who was doing the attacking, clearly with an eye on his expected time losses in the upcoming TT, adding 19 seconds to the gap between him and Dumoulin.

**3**  
Versatile José  
Joaquín Rojas's  
third place was his  
third successive  
top-10 finish, all  
on different  
parcours



STAGE 15: COMILLAS > SOTRES, 175.8KM

## Steep climb master wins

Joaquim Rodríguez picked up the 14th Grand Tour stage win of his career and with it moved within a second of Fabio Aru's lead. The explosive Spanish climber launched his move in the final kilometre (yes, another summit finish) leaving Aru in a desperate struggle behind to limit his losses. In the end, Rodríguez won by a 12-second margin from Rafal Majka, who demonstrated that he can compete with the very best climbers. The other GC contenders trickled home all within a minute.

3

Rodríguez jumped three places from fourth to first in the points classification with his win



STAGE 16: LUARCA > ERMITA DE ALBA, 185KM

## Schleck's still got it

Forty five years since his father, Johnny, became the first Luxembourgish cyclist to win a stage in the Vuelta, Fränk Schleck produced a stunning performance to remind us all that he isn't finished just yet. The 2011 Tour de France podium finisher ascended the brutal final climb with Rodolfo Torres for company, but he dispensed of the Colombian when the gradient sharpened and finished 70 seconds clear of him. Rodríguez showed he was intent on winning his first ever Grand Tour, claiming two seconds on Aru to lead by one second overall. Dumoulin rode out of his skin to limit his losses.



1,625

Days since Schleck won the 2011 Critérium International, his last race win that wasn't a National Championship

**STAGE 17: BURGOS > BURGOS (ITT), 38.7KM**

## Dumoulin surges into red

Tom Dumoulin duly delivered what was expected, winning the TT and bettering Aru by 1-53 to lead the overall by just three seconds. It wasn't, however, the two or three-minute winning margin that many were predicting the Giant-Alpecin rider would take, and

it left the race wide open. Previous incumbent Joaquim Rodríguez unsurprisingly lost significant time, falling to third overall, while Nairo Quintana showed his improvements against the clock with the sixth fastest time to leapfrog to fifth overall.

**50.460**

The average speed in kph that Dumoulin recorded

**STAGE 18: ROA > RIAZA, 204KM**

## Victory that Roche craved

Twice a top-10 finisher in the Vuelta, Nicolas Roche finally got the stage win his attacking bravado warranted. The Irishman and Trek Factory Racing's Haimar Zubeldia crested the stage's final hill and descended towards Riaza together, with the Sky man sprinting past the Spaniard for the win. The GC fraternity was 38 seconds shy of the duo, all intact despite Aru's best efforts. The Italian attacked six times on the final climb, but each time Dumoulin kept himself within reach to preserve his three-second advantage.


**174**

Race days since Zubeldia last finished in the top three of a stage

**STAGE 19: MEDINA DEL CAMPO > AVILA, 185.8KM**

## Dumoulin extends his advantage

The Giant-Alpecin team wasn't assembled with overall GC ambitions in mind, but two days from the end of the race, they finally gave Tom Dumoulin the assistance he longed for, and deserved, pacing him expertly on the final cobbled climb to extend his lead over Aru by an additional three seconds. Both Dumoulin and Aru had crashed earlier in a stage that was won by Alexis Gougeard. The Ag2r rider, aged 22, rode away from the remaining four breakaway riders to win by 40 seconds.

**1,132**

The height of Avila in metres, the highest city in Spain





**STAGE 20: SAN LORENZO DE EL ESCORIAL  
> CERCEDILLA, 175.8KM**

## Aru steals the lead

This was the day when a captivating Vuelta was settled once and for all. To the despair of the Netherlands and other cycling fans who had been enthralled by the performance of Tom Dumoulin, Fabio Aru and his Astana team played a tactical blinder that landed the red jersey on Aru's shoulders. Luis León Sánchez and Andrey Zeits, part of the early break, assisted Aru on the day's penultimate climb, dropping Dumoulin. The red jersey almost caught them on the descent but on the final climb

Dumoulin — riding with no team-mates — finally cracked and lost

3-52, falling to sixth overall. Joaquim Rodríguez and Rafal Majka rounded off the podium.

**117km**

The distance Lampre-Merida's Rubén Plaza rode solo en route to a sensational stage victory



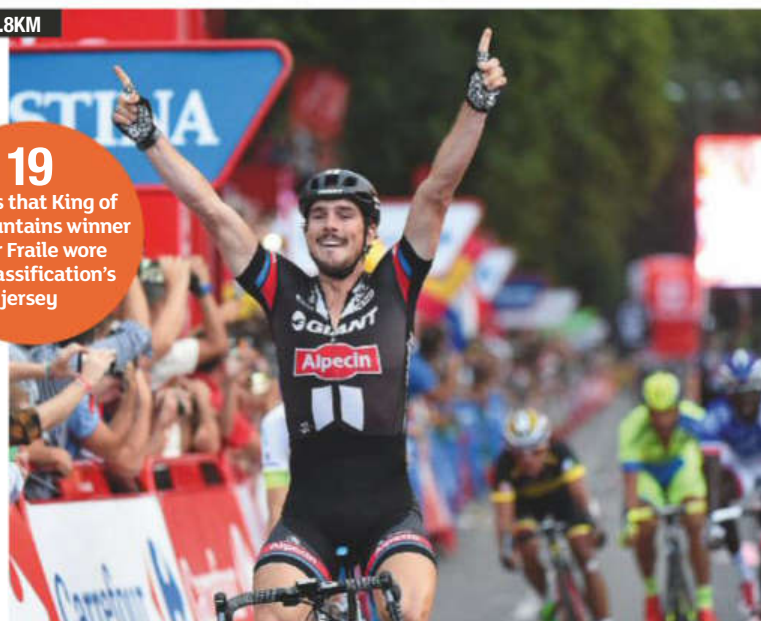
**STAGE 21: ALCALA DE HENARES > MADRID, 98.8KM**

## Degenkolb's 10th Vuelta win

John Degenkolb finally won a 2015 Grand Tour stage at his last attempt. The German sprinter looked to have launched his sprint on the streets of Madrid too early, but he had enough to stave off the pace of the encroaching Danny Van Poppel and Jempy Drucker. The processional stage into the Spanish capital saw Fabio Aru celebrate wearing the red jersey, although the green jersey changed hands: Alejandro Valverde capitalised on a Joaquim Rodríguez puncture to win the stage's first intermediate sprint and snatch the points classification from his Spanish comrade.

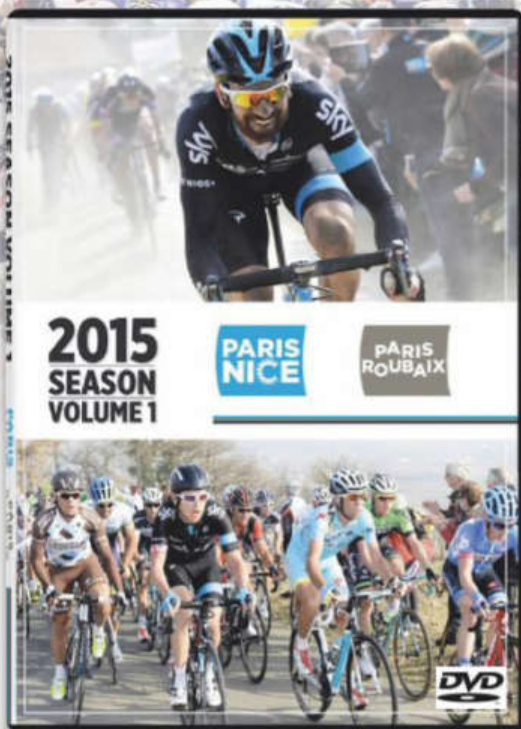
**19**

Stages that King of the Mountains winner Omar Fraile wore the classification's jersey



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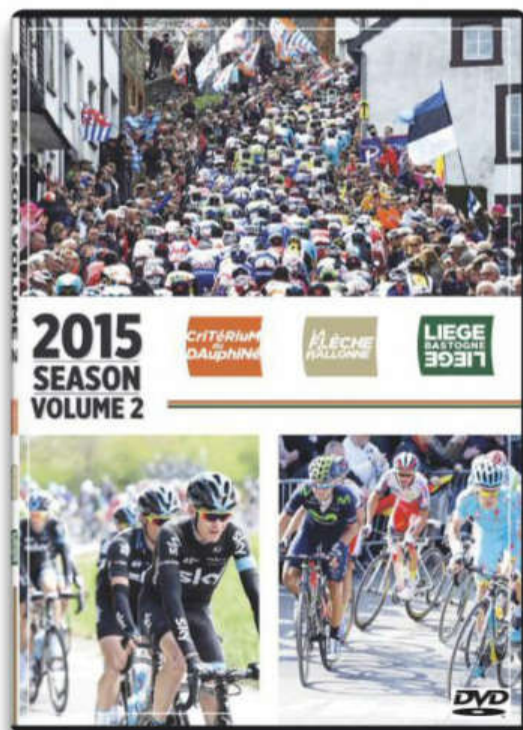
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# RACINGDIGEST

For the second year running Lizzie Armitstead was crowned World Cup winner, while Edvald Boasson Hagen repeated what he did in 2009 by taking the Tour of Britain

**L**izzie Armitstead won the GP de Plouay to secure her second successive World Cup title — although this time she did it very much the hard way.

Whereas last year she was able to relax at Plouay, having secured the title in the penultimate leg, this year she needed not only to register a high placing, but to also finish ahead of rival Anna van der Breggen.

Such a scenario seemed unlikely just eight days earlier, with a strong outing from her Boels-Dolmans team in the Open de Suède Vargarda team time trial keeping her at the top of the rankings. At that time van der Breggen languished behind Armitstead in the World Cup standings and, although she did manage to close the gap thanks to her Rabo-Liv team's victory, Boels-Dolmans's third-place finish was enough to retain a reasonably comfortable advantage of 25 points going into the final two rounds.

But things went wrong a couple of days later during the finale of the Vargarda road race. Armitstead had seemed to have done the hard part by riding attentively and controlling the race, to ensure the race culminated in a bunch finish. But in that sprint for the line, the rider directly in front of her — Carmen Small (Bigla) — fell going into the last corner, forcing Armitstead to take evasive action, lose momentum, and thus finished down in 19th place.

Van der Breggen led the peloton into that corner in support of her team-mate Lucina Brand, and therefore was unaffected by the crash. She leapfrogged ahead of Armitstead in the World Cup rankings by finishing fifth behind winner Jolien d'Hooire (Wiggle-Honda), who consequently became the new World Cup leader.

Armitstead was not ready to give up yet, however. Unlike d'Hooire — who opted to skip the GP de Plouay in order to not disrupt her World Championships preparation — her heart was set on winning the World Cup, and went into the final round aiming high.

"We're just going for the win in this race,"



## Armitstead retains World Cup title

Armitstead said before setting off. "The only thing I can control is myself. I can't control Anna, I'm just going to go out and try to win the race."

As Armitstead had to place at least two positions ahead of van der Breggen to even stand a chance of deposing her as World Cup leader, it made sense to put her under pressure by going for the win rather than waiting for a sprint and hoping for the best.

And that's exactly what she did when she attacked on the final Ty Marec uphill drag. It had the feel of an all-or-nothing move, and whittled the group behind her down to just

four chasers, but van der Breggen proved powerful enough to drag them back up to Armitstead's wheel.

The race therefore culminated in a five-woman sprint, with the odds seemingly stacked against Armitstead. All van der Breggen had to do was follow her wheel and finish no worse than one position behind her.

But the finale took a crucial twist when van der Breggen opted to follow an attack by Elisa Longo Borghini (Wiggle-Honda). By marking the move herself rather than leaving the others to do it, the Dutchwoman lost her ideal position on Armitstead's wheel and allowed the Briton to



## Alexander Kristoff is still winning

The GP de Plouay — which Alexander Kristoff won in a bunch sprint ahead of Simone Ponzi (Southeast) and Ramunas Navardauskas (Cannondale-Garmin) — became the Norwegian's 20th win of the season. Not only is that more than any other rider this year, but also makes him just the sixth rider since 2006 to achieve that total in a single year.

### MOST WINS IN A SEASON (SINCE 2006)

**23 WINS** Mark Cavendish (2009)

**22 WINS** Peter Sagan (2013)

**21 WINS** André Greipel (2010), Tom Boonen (2006)

**20 WINS** Alexander Kristoff (2015), André Greipel (2010)



## How Rigoberto Uran won the GP de Québec

**1** Etixx-Quick Step team-mate Julian Alaphilippe marks a dangerous move featuring Philippe Gilbert, which is brought back on the penultimate lap.

**2** In a frantic finale, first Etixx's Michal Kwiatkowski neutralises an attack from Greg Van Avermaet with 4km to go, then Alaphilippe puts in an attack himself, forcing Van Avermaet's team-mate Silvan Dillier to chase.

**3** Alaphilippe is caught and Uran finally makes his move a few hundred metres later, just after the 1km to go banner.



**4** FDJ's Arthur Vichot tries and fails to follow his wheel, leaving Uran alone and allowing him to focus solely on making it to the finish and not having to worry about beating anyone in a sprint.

**5** Uran paces his effort perfectly to hold off a peloton led out by Dillier — visibly tired having done much of the chasing earlier — on the uphill drag to the finish, and wins by less than a second.

## How Tim Wellens won the GP de Montréal

**1** The heavens open — a good omen for Tim Wellens, who has a record of going well in adverse conditions.

**2** He follows Adam Yates as he attacks on the last ascent of Mont Royal.

**3** The pair works well together, with Wellens happy to take most turns to ensure they hold off the chase group.



**4** They build a big enough lead for Wellens to afford to slow the pace down to a crawl when leading out the sprint, prompting Yates to make his move early.

**5** Wellens responds by following Yates's wheel, and then passing him with 100 metres to go.

slip behind her, out of sight. Armitstead was able to use the slipstream of Emma Johansson (Orica-GreenEdge) for a precious couple of seconds to come from deep and take the sprint victory, while van der Breggen — having used up precious energy following Borghini — faded to finish sixth.

The sprint made for a thrilling finale to a tightly fought World Cup. All season Armitstead has demonstrated the class to win the season-long tournament. Add to that the cunning and resilience required to come back from a difficult position, and she makes for a worthy winner.



# Tour of Britain belongs to Boasson Hagen again

**T**his time six years ago, Edvald Boasson Hagen won the Tour of Britain as a fresh faced 22-year-old apparently on the cusp of greatness.

It had just been announced that he had signed a lucrative new deal with the exciting-looking new Team Sky off the back of a superb season in which he'd won Ghent-Wevelgem, a stage of the Giro d'Italia, and the overall at the Eneco Tour. Then, in his last race for Columbia-HTC, he departed in style by winning the overall at the Tour of Britain by pulling off an extraordinary four successive sprint victories.

This month Boasson Hagen was again crowned champion at the Tour of Britain, but in terms of the context of his career the two victories could hardly be more different. Whereas the 2009 result seemed to confirm the emergence of one of the new best riders in the world, this year's victory has helped redeem yet another disappointing season for a 28-year-old whose career is in danger of drifting away without delivering on its huge early promise.

It was great to see Boasson Hagen back riding near his best, and the manner in which he won the race reminded us of what a swashbuckling all-rounder he can be. Having moved up to

second overall on the back of bonus seconds earned in bunch sprints, the Norwegian claimed the overall lead on stage five by showcasing his ability to ride uphill, out-climbing everyone bar Wout Poels on the summit finish at Hartside Fell.

Not content to sit back and wait for the sprint, Boasson Hagen made the bold move of attacking the three supposedly superior climbers alongside him in the lead group, and was only caught — and then passed — by Poels with the finish line in sight.

Despite missing out on the stage win, Boasson Hagen claimed the overall lead ahead of Poels by a mere second. Such a slender lead seemed to unnerve the Norwegian, as he again went out on the attack the following day to Nottingham; he picked up bonus seconds on the first intermediate sprint, before launching off the front of the peloton with 2.5km to go. The ploy worked: though he again missed out on the stage win (this time to Etxe's Matteo Trentin), he gained a four-second gap on the bunch, and claimed another crucial glut of bonus seconds. The 13-second lead he amassed turned out to be enough to win overall.

It is telling that Boasson Hagen managed to win this race more on the back of his climbing than his sprinting. The rider who burst onto the

scene six years ago made his name as a sprinter who could also hold his own in challenging terrain, but since the days he was winning the likes of those four successive bunch sprints in 2009 he has lost some of his speed.

On the stages in this year's race that ended in bunch sprints Boasson Hagen lagged behind the quickest sprinters. First it was Sky's Elia Viviani, who surprised Mark Cavendish and André Greipel to take the opening stage, and then won again two days later. Etxe stagiaire Fernando Gaviria put in an amazing turn of speed to win stage four's bunch sprint, before Greipel finally got into his groove to win the last two bunch sprints — although the latter was rescinded after he was adjudged to have deviated from his sprinting line, and Viviani got his third win of the race.

You have to look back to early 2012 for the last time Boasson Hagen was beating riders of that calibre in head-to-head sprint finishes. Looking to the future, this Tour of Britain victory may pave the way for the Norwegian to place more concerted effort on winning week-long stage races such as Paris-Nice.

Boasson Hagen has been in career limbo for some time now — but he may just have found his niche.

## Rise of the new sprinting generation

One of the standout moments at the Tour of Britain this year was when Fernando Gaviria opened up his sprint on stage four.

He had to make his move from relatively far back, and André Greipel — probably the quickest sprinter in the world right now — was ideally placed behind his lead-out man. But the Colombian (pictured below) shocked everyone by exploding out of the slipstream of Edvald Boasson Hagen, and storming past Greipel to win the stage with a superb and unexpected turn of speed.

Aged just 21, the win seemed to announce the Colombian as the future star of sprinting — but this month there were plenty of other fresh-faced riders in the running for that title.

Wales's 22-year-old Owain Doull finished in the top 10 of all the stages at the Tour of Britain that ended in a bunch sprint, while also performing well on the climbs and tougher terrain to end the race with a spot on the podium in third overall. He looks set to be the first success story from the Team Wiggins project.

Meanwhile in Spain at the Vuelta, it was similarly youthful sprinters winning stages. Caleb Ewan, 21, has been causing a stir among the amateur ranks for several years but confirmed his immense potential by winning stage five for Orica-GreenEdge, ahead of established names such as John Degenkolb and Peter Sagan. Then 22-year-old Danny Van Poppel (who in 2013 became the youngest post-war rider to start the Tour de France) claimed the biggest win of his career on stage 12.

All four look supremely talented, and with these big wins now under their belts they will have the likes of Greipel, Kittel and Cavendish all looking over their shoulders next season.



## Elia Viviani: fast starter

When Elia Viviani won the first stage of this year's Tour of Britain, he repeated the same feat he had achieved at both the Giro d'Italia and the Eneco Tour — winning the opening road stage of a stage race.

These successes mean he has won the first road stage at three of the seven stage races he has competed in this year,

or 42.9 per cent, suggesting he is something of a specialist at starting races in top form.

However, the Tour of Britain aside, where he went on to win two more stages, the Italian does struggle to maintain that form. His winning rate falls to just 7.3 per cent after the first stage.

### VIVIANI'S 2015 STAGE RACE STATS

	Opening road stage (excluding TTs)	All other road stages (excluding TTs)
Stages competed in	7	41
Stages won	3	3
Win ratio	42.9%	7.3%



## Tour de l'Avenir

Marc Soler, 21, became the fifth Spaniard to win the talent-spotting race since 2000. But that feat has tended to be more of

a curse than a blessing — neither of the previous four Spaniards have gone on to make as big a name for themselves as the

riders who finished below them. For the record, Jack Haig, Matvey Mamykin and Sam Oomen were runners-up.

YEAR	SPANISH WINNER	SUCCESS STORY
2000	Iker Flores	David Moncoutié (finished second)
2003	Egoi Martínez	Philippe Gilbert (finished fourth)
2006	Moisés Duenas	Robert Gesink (finished second)
2013	Rubén Fernández	Adam Yates (finished second)

## Shelley Olds swaps teams, & swaps back again...

**0** Number of wins for Bigla in 2015, after leaving Alé-Cipollini in 2014 to join the Swiss squad.

**3** Number of wins since resigning for Alé-Cipollini on June 26, including the inaugural La Madrid Challenge by La Vuelta.



# The month ahead...

## Il Lombardia

BERGAMO-COMO, ITALY, OCTOBER 4



**H**ave the organisers finally got the route right for this year's Il Lombardia? Since revamping it for the 2011 edition the race has suffered something of an identity crisis, and the organisers have continued to tweak and tinker to try and find the right balance between preserving the race's traditions and ensuring exciting racing.

Taking out the Villa Vergano last year was a step in the right direction. The climb, which features slopes as steep as 15 per cent, had had a detrimental effect on the race, with the organisers making the classic mistake of placing it too close to the finish. As tends to be the case whenever a difficult climb is situated near the end of the race — be it the Mur de Huy at Flèche Wallonne or a Grand Tour mountain stage with a very steep mountaintop finish — the rest of the race preceding the Villa Vergano became neutered. The big names were too afraid to attack early on in fear of

running out of necessary reserves, and thus each edition boiled down to a predictable showdown up the final climb, won with equal predictability by Joaquim Rodríguez in 2012 and 2013.

Last year's finish was undoubtedly improved by its absence. This time a first selection was made on a descent within the final 25 kilometres, and then another in the final kilometre as Dan Martin unleashed a surprise attack, in a finish that was anything but predictable.

But still, something was not quite right. The atmospheric Madonna del Ghisallo — perhaps the most recognisable part of the Lombardy route — was relegated to around 200km from the finish line before the real racing had even begun, while some argued the profile lacked the difficulty worthy of a race considered a climber's Classic.

This year, the organisers might just have struck the perfect balance. The Ghisallo is back to a decisive position at around 65km from the finish, and is

followed almost immediately by the long Colma di Sormano and the super-steep Muro di Sormano, in what looks set to be a very difficult looking section of the race. Two climbs are included in the final 25km in the shape of the Caviglio and San Fermo della Battaglia, but, crucially, neither is as steep as the Villa Vergano.

The hope is that with less selective climbs featuring in the finale there'll be more committed moves put in during the difficult section culminating in the Muro di Sormano, and therefore more exciting racing. With average gradients of 6.9 per cent and 8.2 per cent respectively, the Caviglio and San Fermo della Battaglia are difficult enough to prompt good racing, but with no stretches higher than 10 per cent they should not pose so much of a threat to frighten the riders into holding back.

Successfully changing the route of a Classic is a notoriously difficult feat to pull off. When the organisers of the Tour of Flanders removed the iconic Muur



van Geraardsbergen they devised a leg-aching loop featuring repeated ascents of the Oude Kwaremont and the Paterberg, which they had hoped would make up for its absence. But that finale has turned out to be too difficult and recent editions of the *Ronde* have been wars of attrition rather than the finely balanced, exciting races the Muur tended to deliver.

However, when done right, changes can make the world of difference. Moving the finish of Amstel Gold to 1.8km after the top of the Cauberg in 2013, for instance, turned out to be an inspired move. The very first edition of the new route was far more aggressive and was won by a long-distance attack from Roman Kreuziger. Each edition since then has been balanced between attackers on the Cauberg and those who can catch back up on the run-in to the finish, in a manner reminiscent to Milan-San Remo.

Will the new Il Lombardia route prompt similar results?

## INSTANT EXPERT

# ABU DHABI TOUR

- 1** The Abu Dhabi Tour is a new stage race run by the partnership of Giro d'Italia organisers RCS Sport and the Abu Dhabi Sports Council.
- 2** It will begin on October 8, occupying the same late season mid-October slot vacated by the cancelled Tour of Beijing.
- 3** Unlike the Tour of Beijing it is not yet a part of the WorldTour, and instead has been given a 2.1 rank.
- 4** The race will consist of four stages, three of them flat and one mountain-top finish on the 11-kilometre Jebel Hafeet, which has an average gradient of 7.5 per cent.
- 5** An 'International Cycling Gala' will also take place after the final stage (a circuit race around the Yas Marina Formula One course), and will involve an awards ceremony for the 2015 WorldTour.



## Paris-Tours: a sprinter's Classic?

Despite its long-established reputation as a Classic for the sprinters, recent editions of Paris-Tours have weighed more and more towards attackers.

The Noughties saw plenty of success for breakaway riders from Richard Virenque and Erik Dekker, to Philippe Gilbert and Frédéric Guesdon, but sprinters tended to still get their chance every other year, with Erik Zabel, Alessandro Petacchi and Oscar Freire among those to have won in bunch sprint finishes.

But since 2011, when the finish moved away from the Avenue de Grammont — a wide,

2.7km long straight — breaks have found it easier to succeed. In 2011 Greg Van Avermaet won from a group that formed around 60km from the finish; in 2012 Marco Marcato was part of a three-man group that contested the sprint for the win; and last year Jelle Wallays beat Thomas Voeckler in a break formed at the beginning of the race (pictured).

Even the one post-Avenue de Grammont race that did culminate in a bunch sprint was not as straightforward as past editions, with eventual winner John Degenkolb and second and third place finishers Michael Mørkøv and Arnaud Démare all briefly finding themselves in a select group of seven that briefly worked together in the finale.

Average size of winning selection between 2001-2010	40.4
Size of winning group in 2011	2
Size of winning group in 2012	3
Size of winning group in 2013	60
Size of winning group in 2014	2

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Sean Kelly powers up the Madonna del Ghisallo on his way to victory in the 1985 Tour of Lombardy (now called Il Lombardia) with world champion Joop Zoetemelk in his wake

# Next month

ON SALE  
OCTOBER  
21

## Mikel Landa

We sit down with the man tipped as Spain's next Grand Tour winner. And he's just signed for Sky

## World Champs

*Cycle Sport* goes to the first Worlds in the US since 1986. Do the American fans still have an appetite for pro racing?

# THE 100 BEST RIDERS OF 2015

*Cycle Sport* counts down the top riders this year. Who will be number one?

## PLUS

Jérémy Roy column  
Il Lombardia  
Pro bike  
Transfer round-up

Photo: Graham Watson

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